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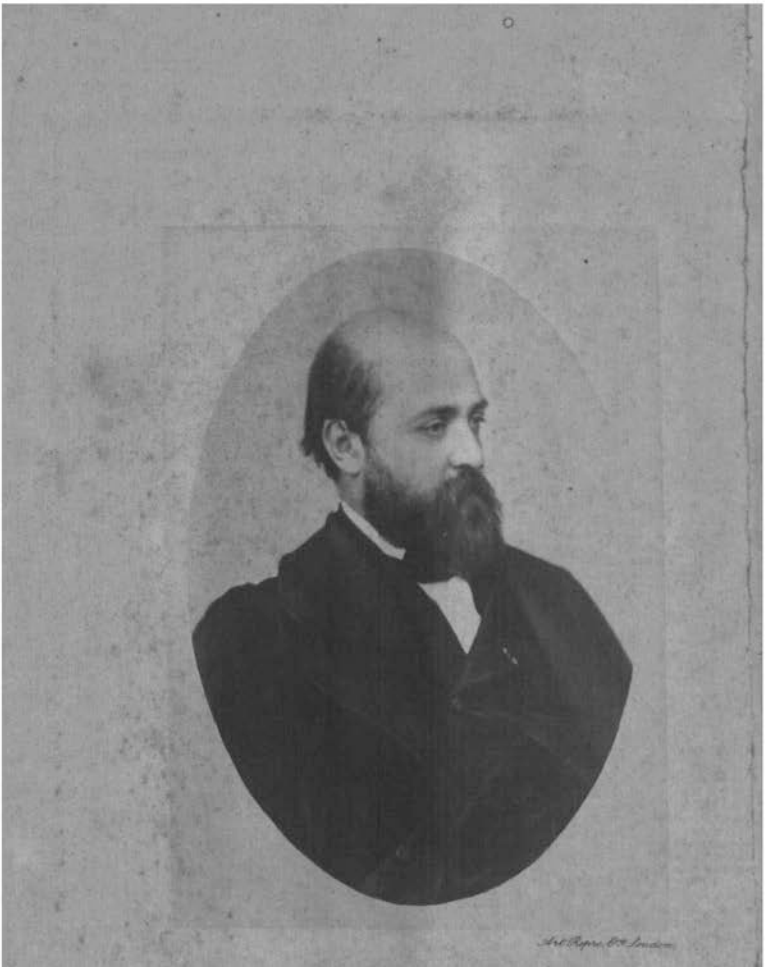

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HENRY MURGER

THE LATIN QUARTER

("Scènes de la Vie de Bohème")

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Translated by
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INTRODUCTION

"BOHEMIA," says Murger, "is the preface to the Academy, the hospital, or the Morgue." Murger died in a hospital, "*ce caravansérail des douleurs humaines,*" as he called it; and if he did not reach the Academy on his way there, he has had to suffer the praise of Academicians; he has become a kind of classic in *négligé*. His *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* sum up an epoch, give us the map of a country: it is the Bohemia of the Latin Quarter, as it existed at the Romantic epoch. And it is also the eternal Bohemia, a country where people love lightly and sincerely, weep and laugh freely, are really hungry, really have their ambitions, and at times die of all these maladies. It is the gayest and most melancholy country in the world. Not to have visited it is to have made the grand tour for nothing. To have lived there too long is to find all the rest of the world an exile. But in Murger's pages, perhaps, after all, you will see more of the country than anything less than a lifetime spent in it will show you.

Murger has his place in the Romantic movement, coming into it by a side door, holding himself a

little aloof in the company, and supplying an instructive comment on it. He shows us, in his poets and painters and musicians, the raw material of Romantics, with a sympathetic mockery; and he introduces us to a lively part of the audience which the Romantics gathered about them. It is only with Alfred de Musset that he finds himself quite at home. Musette, he said, is Bernerette's younger sister.

The Bohemians of Murger are like children playing at life with all the gay seriousness of children. They have never unlearnt the child's gesture of grasping at any shining thing, the vehemence of his desire for the moon, the irrational tempest of his tears or of his mirth, the regardlessness of anything but the desire of the moment. They realise very keenly that I am I, they can admit frankly that you are you, when you cross their path; but nothing has ever been able to teach them, any more than the child in the nurse's arms can be taught, that there exists a vague and vast abstraction, neither you nor I, but made up of infinite identities that have allowed themselves to be swallowed up for one another's benefit: the intangible, inexplicable monster that we call Society. Conscious of something against them in the world, they invent arbitrary nicknames: the Bourgeois, the Philistines, the Jews. They have rarely any desire to revolt; they ask only to be allowed to go their own way, on their own terms of logical enjoyment

and material impossibility. If talent, or the desire of talent, will bring in money of itself, if the winter will not freeze them when there is no fire in the grate, if Mimi will be content with a garret on the fifth floor, they have little to ask. After all, comfort is a relative term, and Murger tells us of an "amateur Bohemian" who, with £400 a year to live on, chose to let himself be buried in a pauper's grave. He had found comfort, of a kind, no doubt, in Bohemia.

In Murger's picture of Bohemia, as Paul de Saint-Victor has noted, with partial truth, "the flames of the stake are changed into fireworks." In his own summing up, at the end of the Preface to the *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*, he speaks of that "delightful and terrible life, which boasts its conquerors and its martyrs, on which no one should enter unless he has made up his mind beforehand to submit to the ruthless law: *Væ Victis!*"; there is his "axiom"; "Unknown Bohemia is not a thoroughfare, it is a blind alley"; the confession of his dedicatory verses:

"Car cette route si belle
Quand je fis mes premiers pas,
Maintenant je la vois telle,
Telle qu'elle existe, hélas!

. . . .

"Et debout sur le rivage,
Les pieds mouillés par le flot,
Ami, c'est d'après l'orage
Que j'ai tracé mon tableau."

He could moralise after the event; there is pathos,

very touching in its way, in his book; but the peculiar value of what he has to tell us of Bohemia is that it is told by a native of the country, who has lived there in his youth, and who has found life, with all its pains and pleasures, as much because of the pains as of the pleasures, admirable. Others have lived there, quite simply, and when they wrote have had other things to tell us. There have been writers who have visited Bohemia on their way to or from Shakespeare's seaport, inquisitive travellers with note-books; but Murger, writing of what he had lived, had precisely the talent to make it live over again, unmoralised, unchanged; the gay, hapless, irresponsible, eternally youthful thing that it had been.

Is the sentiment of the whole thing, it has often been asked, false sentiment? It is the sentiment youth has of itself, at the flowering moment of existence; and to whom, and in what sense, does a disillusioning experience give the right to deny the truth of a sentiment which had at least the irresistible sanction of a sensation? This gay and amusing book, in which youth speaks for itself with its own voice, is, after all, sad with the consciousness of the flight of youth.

"La jeunesse n'a qu'un temps,"

Murger sings, in his most famous song. All these merry, shifting, shiftless people seem continually to be saying: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; they have the feverish gaiety of the gambler

who has staked all on one throw. It is all for love, and love, with them, is known always to be a fragile, inconstant thing, even at the sharpest moment of enjoyment. If it lasts at all, it will last as a memory; and they are careful in the preparation of that kind of posthumous enjoyment. "Muse de l'infidélité," Murger addresses the eternal Musette, in one of those moments of recollection:

"Non, ma jeunesse n'est pas morte,
Il n'est pas mort ton souvenir;
Et si tu frappais à ma porte,
Mon cœur, Musette, irait t'ouvrir.
Puisque à ton nom toujours il tremble,
Muse de l'infidélité,
Reviens encor manger ensemble
Le pain béni de la gaiété."

And then, along with this pathetic feeling in regard to love, there is another, more sordid, not less actual, kind of pathos: the cold of winter nights in a garret, the odour of rich men's dinners as one passes penniless in the street. These people are very genuinely poor, and they discover no hidden treasure. They want, too, to be famous, and they have neither the talent nor the luck for that, the poor man's consolation. They see the hospital at the end of the way; at best, they divine it around the corner. And meanwhile there is the reality of day by day, the necessity of a few poor luxuries: Mimi's bonnet, Francine's muff. Here, once more, is a sentiment which only the quite rich and fortunate can afford to distinguish as "false."

And Murger handles this material lightly, not making it less pathetic because he declines to take melancholy things seriously. Bohemia has its own philosophy, a laughing kind of Stoicism, and Murger shows us this philosophy in action. He becomes a humorist by his faithfulness to the point of view which it is his business to render.

Murger has an almost English quality in his humour, a quality so foreign to the French mind that the English word has been adopted to express a thing so essentially English. With him, as with Dickens, for example, mirth runs easily into pathos, though, with him, more simply, with less parade of tears. He professes no psychology beyond the humorous or pathetic representation of a few emotions common to most people; giving us, as he does, youth's valuation of itself as the only quite important thing in the world, he fills out the types with a youthful exaggeration. He writes to entertain, and he finds entertainment to hand in the probable enough adventures of a few young men and women living from hand to mouth with persistent gaiety. If you look for realism, as the word has come to be understood, you will be disappointed. You will find instead a certain kind of reality, caught as it were in passing; an improvisation in which the faults of the artist count for something, in their suggestion of the mere instincts or accidents of nature; a human note, cry or laughter, which has its artistic value, as in some of the tales of Bret

Harte, which are at once unreal and warmly human.

Murger writes of a life which is itself a tragic comedy in fancy dresses, a life wholly in exaggeration. No one is quite sincere in Bohemia, because sincerity is a respectable virtue, tedious in the long run, and the transposition of things part of the charm of existence there. Everyone poses for effect, an effect of sincerity, if you will. Life is to be an art: rhetoric is the embellishment of art; let life be rhetorical, a vari-coloured thing of sonorous cadences. Murger still touches us, through all that is unreal in the life that he represents and all that is unreal in his representation of it; awakening in us, against our will, against our better judgment, it may be, a sharp, personal sense of pity, of acute interest, as at the recollection of something that had actually happened to ourselves. He gives us every sentiment for its own sake, taking part with it uncritically; and, in his forgetfulness to be an artist, seems to come closer to us, like a comrade.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

PREFACE

THE Bohemians described in this book have nothing in common with the Bohemians of boulevard playwrights, who have used the word as a synonym for pickpocket and murderer; nor are they recruited from the ranks of bear-leaders, sword-eaters, vendors of key-rings, inventors of "infallible systems," stock-brokers of doubtful antecedents and the followers of the thousand and one vague and mysterious callings in which the principal occupation is to have none whatever and to be ready at any time to do anything save that which is right.

The Bohemians of this book are by no means a race of to-day; they have existed all over the world ever since time began, and can lay claim to an illustrious descent. In the time of the ancient Greeks (not to pursue their genealogy any further) there was once a famous Bohemian who wandered about the fertile land of Ionia trusting to luck for a living, eating the bread of charity, stopping of nights by hospitable firesides where he hung the musical lyre to which the "Loves of Helen" had been sung and the "Fall of Troy."

As we descend the course of ages we find forerunners of the modern Bohemian in every epoch

famous for art or letters. Bohemia continues the tradition of Homer through the Middle Ages by the means of minstrel, *improvisatori*, *les enfants du gai savoir*, and all the melodious vagabonds from the lowlands of Touraine; all the muses errant who wandered with a beggar's wallet and a *trouvère's* harp over the fair and level land where the eglantine of Clémence Isaure should still flourish.

In the transition period, between the Age of Chivalry and the dawn of the Renascence, the Bohemian still frequents the highways of the realm, and is even found in Paris streets. Witness Master Pierre Gringoire, for instance, friend of vagrants and sworn foe to fasting, hungry and lean as a man may well be when his life is but one long Lent; there he goes, prowling along, head in air like a dog after game, snuffing up the odours from cookshop and kitchen; staring so hard at the hams hanging from the pork-butcher's hooks, that they visibly shrink and lose weight under the covetous gaze of his glutton's eyes; while he jingles in imagination (not, alas! in his pockets) those ten crowns promised him by their worships the aldermen for a right pious and devout *sotie* composed by him for the stage of the Salle of the Palais de Justice. And the chronicles of Bohemia can place another profile beside the melancholy and rueful visage of Esméralda's lover —a companion portrait of jollier aspect and less ascetic humour. This is Master François Villon, lover of *la belle qui fut heaulmière* — poet and

vagabond *par excellence*, with a breadth of imagination in his poetry. A strange obsession appears in In it, caused no doubt by a presentiment of a kind which the ancients attribute to their poets. Villon is haunted by the idea of the gibbet; and indeed one day nearly wore a hempen cravat because he looked a little too closely at the colour of the king's coinage. And this same Villon, who more than once outstripped the *posse comitatus* at his heels, this roistering frequenter at the low haunts in the Rue Pierre Lescot, this smell-feast at the court of the Duke of Egypt, this Salvator Rosa of poetry, wrote verse with a ring of heart-broken sincerity in it that touches the hardest hearts, so that at sight of his muse, her face wet with streaming tears, we forget the rogue, the vagabond and the rake.

François Villon, besides, has been honoured above all those poets whose work is little known to folk for whom French literature only begins "when Malherbe came," for he has been more plundered than any of them, and even by some of the greatest names of the modern Parnassus. There has been a rush for the poor man's field; people have struck the coin of glory for themselves out of his little hoard of treasure. Such and such a *ballade*, written in the gutter under the drip of the eaves some bitter day by the Bohemian poet, or some love-song improvised in the den where *la belle qui fut heaulmière* unclasped her girdle for all-comers, now makes its appearance, transformed to suit polite society and

scented with ambergris and musk, in albums adorned with the armorial bearings of some aristocratic Chloris.

But now begins the grand age of the Renascence. Michel Angelo mounts the scaffolding in the Sixtine Chapel and looks thoughtful as young Rafael goes up the staircase of the Vatican with the sketches of the Loggie under his arm. Benvenuto is planning his *Perseus* and Ghiberti carving the bronze gates of the Baptistery, while Donatello rears his marble on the bridge across Arno. The city of the Medici rivals the city of Leo X. and Julius II. in the possession of masterpieces, while Titian and Paul Veronese adorn the city of the Doges—St. Mark competing with St. Peter.

The fever of genius suddenly broke out with the violence of an epidemic in Italy, and the splendid contagion spread through Europe. Art, the Creator's rival, became the equal of kings. Charles V. stoops to pick up Titian's brush, and Francis I. waits on the printer Etienne Dolet, who is busy correcting the proofs (it may be) of *Pantagruel.*

In the midst of this resurrection of the intellect the Bohemian seeks, as heretofore, for the poorest shelter and pittance of food—*la pâtée et la niche,* to use Balzac's expression. Clément Marot, a familiar figure in the ante-chambers of the Louvre, is favoured by the fair Diane, who one day would be the favourite of a king, and lights three reigns with

her smile; then the poet's faithless muse will pass from the boudoir of Diane de Poitiers to the chamber of Marguerite de Valois, a dangerous honour, which Marot must pay for by imprisonment. Almost at the same time another Bohemian goes to the court of Ferrara, as Marot went to the court of Francis I. This is Tasso, whose lips were kissed by the epic muse in his childhood on the shore at Sorrento. But, less fortunate than the lover of Diane and Marguerite, the author of *Gerusalemme* must pay for his audacious love of a daughter of the House of Este with the loss of his reason and his genius.

The religious wars and political storms that broke out in France with the arrival of the Medici did not stay the flight of Art. Jean Goujon, after discovering anew the pagan art of Pheidias, might be struck down by a bullet on the scaffolding of the Innocents; but Ronsard would find Pindar's lyre, and with the help of the *Plèiade* found the great French school of lyric poets. To this school of revival succeeded the reaction, thanks to Malherbe and his followers. They drove out all the exotic graces introduced into the language by their predecessors' efforts to acclimatise them in poetry. And a Bohemian, Mathurin Régnier, was one of the last to defend the bulwarks of lyric poetry against the assault of the band of rhetoricians and grammarians who pronounced Rabelais to be a barbarian and Montaigne obscure. It was the same Mathurin Régnier, the cynic, who tied fresh

knots in Horace's scourge, and made indignant outcry against his age with "Honour is an old-fashioned saint, and nobody keeps his day."

In the seventeenth century the enumeration of Bohemia includes some of the best known names in literature under Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. Bohemia counts wits of the Hôtel Rambouillet among its members and lends a hand in the weaving of the *Guirlande de Julie*. Bohemia has her *entrées* at the Palais Cardinal and writes the tragedy of *Marianne* in collaboration with the poet-minister, the Robespierre of monarchy. Bohemia strews Marion Delorme's *ruelle* with pretty speeches and pays court to Ninon under the trees in the Place Royale, breakfasting of a morning at the *Goinfres* or the *Epée Royale*, supping of nights at the Duc de Joyeuse's table and fighting duels under the street lamps for Uranie's sonnet as against the sonnet of Job. Bohemia makes love and war, and even tries a hand at diplomacy; and in her old age, tired of adventures, perpetuates a metrical version of the Old and New Testaments, signing a receipt for a living on every page till at length, well fed with fat prebends, she seats herself on a bishop's seat, or in an Academical armchair founded by one of her chosen children.

'Twas in the transition period between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that two mighty geniuses appeared, whose names are always brought forward by the nations to which they belong in any

literary rivalry. Molière and Shakespeare are two famous Bohemians, with only too many resemblances in their destinies.

The most famous names in the literature of the eighteenth century are likewise to be found in the archives of Bohemia; Jean Jacques Rousseau and d'Alembert (the foundling left on the steps of Notre-Dame) among the greatest; and, among the most obscure, Malfilâtre and Gilbert, these two much overrated persons, for the inspiration of the one was only a pale reflection of the pallid lyric fervour of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, while that of the other was a blend of incapacity and pride, with a hatred which had not even the excuse of initiative and sincerity, since it was only the paid instrument of party spirit and party rancour.

And here we bring our rapid summary of the illustrious history of Bohemia to a close. We have purposely set these prefatory remarks in the forefront of this book, so as to set the reader on his guard against any mistaken idea of the meaning of the word "Bohemian" which he might perhaps be inclined to entertain before reading it, for the class whose customs and language we have herein endeavoured to trace makes it a point of honour to differentiate itself from those strata of society to which the name of "Bohemian" has long been misapplied.

To-day, as in the past, any man who enters the path of Art, with his art as his sole means of support, is bound to pass by way of Bohemia.

Preface

Those of our contemporaries who display the noblest shields in the chivalry of Art were most of them Bohemians once, and in the calm and prosperous glory of later life they often look back (perhaps with regret) to the days when they were climbing the green upward slope of youth, with no other fortune, in the sunlight of their twenty years, but courage (a young man's virtue) and hope, the riches of the poor.

For the benefit of the nervous reader, the timorous Philistine, and that section of the public which cannot have too many dots on the i's of a definition, we repeat in axiomatic form—

"Bohemia is a stage of the artist's career; it is the preface to the Academy, the Hospital or the Morgue."

Let us add that Bohemia neither exists nor can exist anywhere but in Paris.

Bohemia, like all ranks of society, comprises various shades and diverse species and subdivisions, which it may be worth while to enumerate and classify.

We will begin with Bohemia unknown to fame, by far the largest section of it. It is made up of the great clan of poor artists condemned by fate to preserve their *incognito* because for one reason or another they cannot find some little corner above the heads of the crowd, and so attest their own existence in Art and show by what they are already what they may be some day. A race of inveterate

dreamers are they, for whom art is always a creed and not a craft, and enthusiasts by conviction. The bare sight of a masterpiece throws them into a fever; their loyal hearts beat high before anything beautiful: they do not ask to what school it belongs nor to what master. This Bohemia draws its recruits from among those young aspirants of whom it is said that "they give promise" as well as from those who fulfil the promise, yet by heedlessness, shyness, or ignorance of the practical, fancy that all is done when the work of art is finished and expect that fame and fortune will burst in on them by burglarious entry. These live on the outskirts of society, as it were, in loneliness and stagnation, till, fossilised in their art, they take the consecrated formulæ about "the aureole round the poet's brow" as a literal statement of fact, and being persuaded that they shine in the shadow, expect people to come to look for them there. We once knew a little school of such originals, so quaint that it is hard to believe that they really existed; they called themselves disciples of "art for Art's sake." According to these simple and ingenuous beings, "art for Art's sake" consisted in starting a mutual admiration society, in refraining from helping Chance, who did not so much as know their address, and waiting for pedestals to come to place themselves under their feet.

This, as everyone sees, is carrying stoicism to the point of absurdity. Well, let us assert it once more

to be believed; in the depths of unknown Bohemia there are such beings as these, whose wretchedness demands a pitying sympathy which common sense is compelled to refuse; for put it to them quietly that we are living in the nineteenth century, that the five-franc piece is Empress of the human race, and that boots do not drop down ready varnished from the sky, and they will turn their backs upon you and abuse you for a Philistine.

Still, at any rate, their mad heroism is thoroughly carried out; they make no outcry, no complaint, submitting passively to the hard and obscure fate which they bring upon themselves. And for the most part they fall victims to the complaint which decimates them, a disease which medical science does not dare to call by its right name—Want. Yet many of them, if they chose, might escape the catastrophe that suddenly cuts them off at an age when life as a rule is only beginning. They need only make one or two concessions to the hard laws of necessity, which means they should learn to live in duplicate, to keep one life for the poet in them—the dreamer that dwells on the mountain heights where choirs of inspired voices sing together—and another for the labourer that contrives to provide daily bread. But this double life, which is almost always carried on in strong and well-balanced natures—indeed, it is one of their chief characteristics—is not often to be met with in young men of this stamp; while pride, a bastard sort of

pride, makes them proof against all counsels of common sense. And so they die young, now and again one of them leaving some piece of work behind him for the world to admire at a later day; and if it had been visible before, the world would no doubt have applauded it sooner.

The battle of Art is very much like war in some respects. All the fame goes to the leaders, while the rank and file share the reward of a few lines in the order of the day; and the soldiers that fall on the field are all buried where they lie — one epitaph must do duty for a score of thousands.

In the same way the crowd always gazes at the man that rises above the rest, and never looks down into the underworld, where the obscure toilers are striving; they end in obscurity, sometimes without even the consolation of smiling over a piece of work completed, and so are laid away from life in a winding-sheet of indifference.

Another section of unexplored Bohemia is made up of young men who have been misled, by themselves or others. They take a fancy for a vocation, and urged on by a suicidal mania, die victims of a chronic attack of pride, idolatrous worshippers of a chimera.

And here may we be permitted a short digression.

The ways of Art, crowded and perilous as they are, grow more and more crowded every day, in spite of the throng, in spite of the obstacles;

Bohemians in consequence have never been more numerous.

Among many reasons for this affluence we might perhaps dwell upon the following one.

Plenty of young men have been found to take seriously declamations as to unhappy artists and poets. The names of Gilbert, Malfilâtre, Chatterton and Moreau have been often, with no small imprudence and most unprofitably, made to sound abroad. People have taken the tombs of these unfortunate persons for pulpits from which to preach about the martyrdom of Art and of Poetry.

> "Farewell, ungenerous earth,
> Cold sunshine, sorrows that flay!
> Unseen, as a ghost in the gloom,
> And lonely, I pass on my way."

This song of despair, composed by Victor Escousse after a hollow success had filled him with pride which stifled him, is, or was at one time, the *Marseillaise* of all the volunteers of Art who went to inscribe their names on the martyr-roll of Mediocrity.

For ambitious vanity the posthumous apotheosis and requiem panegyrics possessed all the attraction that the precipice usually has for weak heads; many fell under the charm and thought that ill-luck was one-half of genius; many dreamed of the bed in a pauper infirmary at which Gilbert died, hoped that they too might become poets for a quarter of an

hour before they died, and quite believed that these were necessary stages on the way to fame.

It is impossible to deal too severely with such immoral lies and murderous paradoxes; many a man has been drawn by them out of paths where he might have met with success, only to end miserably in a career where he is blocking the way of those who, having a true vocation, alone possess the right to enter upon it.

It is the preaching of such dangerous doctrines and the uncalled-for glorification of the dead which has brought into being the ridiculous race of the "misunderstood," the lachrymose poets whose muse is always seen with red eyes and dishevelled hair, and all the mediocrities who cannot create anything and from the limbo of manuscript call the Muse a harsh stepmother and Art their executioner.

All really powerful minds have their word to say, and, as a matter of fact, say it sooner or later. Genius or talent do not come by pure accident; they are not there without reason, and for the same reason they cannot always remain in obscurity. If the crowd does not go to them, they find their way to the crowd. Genius is like the sun: everyone can see it. Talent is the diamond; it may lie out of sight in the shadow for a long while, but somebody always finds it. So it is pity thrown away to feel moved by the lamentations and twaddle talked by a class of intruders and worthless persons who thrust themselves into the domains of Art, Art itself opposing them,

and who make up a section of Bohemia where idleness, debauchery, and toadyism are the general rule.

Axiom.—Unknown Bohemia is not a thoroughfare; it is a *cul-de-sac.*

In truth, it is a life which leads to nothing. It means brutalising want; intelligence is extinguished by it, as a lamp goes out for want of air; the heart is turned to stone by a savage misanthropy; the best natures become the worst. Anyone so unfortunate as to stay too long, to go too far to turn back, can never get out again; or can only escape by forcing his way out, at his peril, into a neighbouring Bohemia, whose manners and customs belong to another jurisdiction than that of the physiology of literature.

We may cite another—a singular variety. These are Bohemians who may be called amateurs. They are not the least curious kind. Bohemian life is full of attraction for their minds—to have doubts as to whether each day will provide a dinner, to sleep out of doors while the clouds shed tears of rainy nights, and to wear nankeen in December, would appear to make up the sum of human felicity. To enter that paradise they leave their home, or the study which would have brought about a sure result, turning their backs abruptly on an honourable career for the quest of adventures and a life of uncertain chances. But since the most robust can hardly cling to a mode of life which would send a Hercules into a consumption, they

throw up the game before long, scamper back in hot haste to the paternal roast, marry their little cousin, set up as notaries in some town of thirty thousand inhabitants, and of an evening by the fireside they have the satisfaction of telling "what they went through in their artist days," with all the pride of a traveller's tale of his tiger hunt. Others plume themselves on holding out; but when once they have exhausted all the means of getting credit open to young men of expectations, they are worse off than genuine Bohemians, who, never having had any other resources, can, at any rate, live by their wits. We have known one of these amateurs, who, after staying three years in Bohemia and quarrelling with his family, died one fine morning and was carried in a pauper's hearse to a pauper's grave; he had an income of ten thousand francs!

Needless to say, these Bohemians have nothing whatsoever to do with Art, and they are the most obscure, amongst the most ignored, in unknown Bohemia.

Now for Bohemia proper, the subject, in part, of this book. Those of whom it is composed are really "called," and have some chance of being among the "chosen" of Art. This Bohemia, like the others, bristles with dangers; it lies between the two gulfs of Anxiety and Want. But, at any rate, there is a road between the two gulfs, and it leads to a goal which the Bohemians may behold with their eyes until they can lay their hands upon it.

Preface

This is official Bohemia, so called because its members have given evidence to the public of their existence; they have made some sign of their presence in life other than the entry on the registrar's page; in short (to use their own expression), they have "got their names up," are known in the literary and artistic market; there is a sale, at moderate prices it is true, but still a sale, for produce bearing their mark.

To arrive at this end, which is quite definitely determined, all ways are good; and the Bohemian knows how to turn everything, even the very accidents by the road, to advantage. Rain or dust, shadow or sun, nothing brings these bold adventurers to a stand. Their very faults have virtues to back them. Ambition keeps their wits always on the alert, sounds the charge, and urges them on to the assault of the future; invention never slackens, it is always grappling with necessity, always carrying a lighted fuse to blow up any obstacle so soon as it is felt to be in the way. Their very subsistence is a work of genius, a daily renewed problem, continually solved by audacious feats of mathematics. These are the men to extract a loan from Harpagon and to find truffles on the raft of the *Medusa*. They can, at a pinch, practise abstinence with all the virtue of an anchorite; but let a little good fortune come their way and you shall presently see them riding the most ruinous hobbies, making love to the youngest

and fairest, drinking of the oldest and best. There are not windows enough for them to fling their money through. Then, when their last five-franc piece is dead and buried, they go back to dine at the ordinary of Chance, where a knife and fork is always laid for them; and preceded by a pack of cunning shifts, they go a-poaching in the preserves of every industry in the neighbourhood of Art, stalking from morning to evening that shyest of game known as the five-franc piece.

Bohemians go everywhere and know everything; sometimes their boots are varnished, sometimes down at heel, and their knowledge and the manner of their going varies accordingly. You may find one of them one day leaning against the chimney-piece of some fashionable drawing-room, and the next at a table in some dancing saloon. They cannot go ten paces on the boulevard but they meet a friend, nor thirty without coming across a creditor.

Bohemia has an inner language of its own, taken from studio talk, the slang of green-rooms, and debates in newspaper offices. All eclecticisms of style meet in this unparalleled idiom, where apocalyptic terms of expression jostle the cock-and-bull story and the rusticity of popular sayings is allied with high-flown periods shaped in the mould whence Cyrano drew his hectoring tirades; where paradox (that spoilt child of modern literature) treats common sense as Cassandra is treated in the pantomimes;

where irony bites like the most powerful acid, and as those dead shots who can hit the bull's-eye with their eyes bandaged. 'Tis an intelligent *argot*, albeit unintelligible to those who have not the key to it, and audacious beyond the utmost bounds of free speech in any tongue. The vocabulary of Bohemia is the hell of rhetoric and the paradise of the neologism.

Such, in brief, is Bohemian life—little known of the social puritan, disparaged by the puritans of Art, insulted by fearful and jealous mediocrity in every form, which cannot clamour forth lies and slander enough to drown the voices and the names of those who reach success through this forecourt of fame by yoking audacity to their talent.

It is a life that needs patience and courage. No one can attempt the struggle unless he wears the stout armour of indifference, proof against fools and envious attacks; and no one can afford to lose his pride in himself for a moment; it is his staff, and without it he will stumble by the way. Delightful and terrible life, which boasts its conquerors and its martyrs, on which no one should enter unless he has made up his mind beforehand to submit to the ruthless law: *væ victis.* H. M.

HENRY MURGER

1822–1861

"The Latin Quarter"

("Scènes de la Vie de Bohème")

1845

THE LATIN QUARTER

("Scènes de la Vie de Bohème")

I

HOW THE BROTHERHOOD CAME TOGETHER

BEHOLD how Chance (styled by sceptics the business-agent of Providence) brought together in a single day every one of the individuals who afterwards met in the bonds of brotherly union, constituting an inner circle in that fraction of the country of Bohemia which the present author has endeavoured to make known to the public.

One morning (it was the 8th of April) Alexandre Schaunard, who cultivated the two liberal arts of music and painting, was suddenly startled out of his slumber by a lusty peal from the king of a neighbouring poultry-yard, who acted as his alarm clock.

"Good gracious!" cried Schaunard, "this feathered timepiece of mine is fast. Impossible! It cannot be to-day already!"

So saying he skipped nimbly out of a piece of furniture of his own industrious invention, a kind

of Jack-of-all-trades, which played the rôle of a bedstead by night (and, without boasting, played it passably ill), while by day it represented everything else, the rest of the furniture having been absent ever since the previous winter—a remarkably rigorous season.

Schaunard proceeded next to wrap himself against the nipping breeze of morning in a pink spangled satin petticoat which he used as a dressing-gown. This piece of finery had been left behind in his room one night after a masked ball by a Folly, foolish to the extent of trusting to Schaunard's specious promises, when the latter, as the Marquis de Mondor, jingled a dozen crowns seductively in his pockets. The said coins, having been cut out of a sheet of base metal with a punch, possessed a purely fancy value, and formed indeed a part of the accessories of a costume borrowed from the theatre.

His morning toilet thus completed, the artist flung open first the window, then the shutter. A ray of sunshine flashed in like an arrow, till he was fain to close a pair of eyes still veiled in the mists of slumber; and at that very moment a clock struck five from a neighbouring steeple.

"It is really the dawn," muttered Schaunard. "An astonishing fact; but there is a mistake all the same," he continued, going up to an almanack on the wall. "The indications of science affirm that at this season of the year the sun ought not to rise before half-past five. It is just five o'clock, and the sun is up already! Blameworthy zeal! The planet is in the wrong. I shall com-

plain to the Astronomical Board. And yet," he went on, "it is time I began to feel a little anxiety on my own account. To-day, no doubt, immediately succeeds to yesterday, and as yesterday was the 7th, to-day must be the 8th of April, unless Saturn has taken to walking backwards. From the tenor of this document," he continued (scanning a formal notice to quit pinned to the wall), "I gather that this day I am bound to leave this room clear of all effects by noon precisely, after counting into the hands of M. Bernard, my landlord, the sum of seventy-five francs, representing three quarters' rent, now due, which he claims in execrable handwriting. And I, as usual, hoped that Chance would take this matter in hand and settle it for me; but it rather looks as if Chance had not found time for it. In fact, I have six hours left, and by making good use of the time I may, perhaps—— Oh, come, let us get to work!"

Schaunard was proceeding to dress himself in a great-coat of some once shaggy material, now irremediably bald, when suddenly, as if a tarantula had bitten him, he began to dance, executing a choregraphic composition of his own which had often won the honour of special attention from the police at public balls.

"Dear me! it is peculiar how the morning air gives one ideas! I am on the track of my tune, it seems to me! Let us see——" And Schaunard sat down half-dressed to the piano, roused the sleeping instrument with a tempestuous assortment of chords, and set off in quest of the melodious phrase which had eluded his pursuit so long.

"*Do, sol, mi, do, la, si, do, ré. Boum! boum! Fa, ré, mi, ré. Eh! eh!* That *ré* rings false, false as Judas!" cried Schaunard, thumping on the doubtful key. "Let us try the minor.

"A young person is pulling a daisy to pieces on a blue lake, and this thing ought to touch off her affliction neatly. 'Tis an idea that is past its first youth. But after all, since it's the fashion, and as no publisher can be found bold enough to bring out a song without a blue lake in it, why you must conform. *Do, sol, mi, do, la, si, do, ré.* That is not so bad—it gives a good enough idea of a daisy, especially to people that are not very well up in botany. *La, si, do, ré* (there's that rascally *ré* again!). Now to give a good idea of the blue lake you ought to have dampness, and azure, and moonlight (for there the moon is in it too). Stay now, it's coming though; we must not forget the swan. *Fa, mi, la, sol,*" continued Schaunard, clinking the crystalline notes of the upper octave. "Now there is only the girl's farewell, when she makes up her mind to take the plunge into the blue lake so as to rejoin her true love that lies buried under the snow. The ending is not very clear, but it is interesting. You want something tender and melancholy. There it comes; now for a dozen bars weeping like Magdalene, fit to split your heart in pieces. *Brr! brr!*" cried Schaunard, shivering in his spangled petticoat, "if it would only split a little firewood as well! There is a joist in the recess over the bed that gets very much in the way when I have company —to dinner. I might light a bit of fire with that (*la, la, ré, mi*)—for I feel inspiration coming on me

with a cold in the head. Pooh! so much the worse! Let us get on with drowning the girl."

Schaunard's fingers tortured the quivering keyboard, as with gleaming eyes and straining ears he pursued the melody that seemed to hover nymph-like above him, but declined to be caught in the maze of sounds that rose like a fog from the vibrating instrument.

"Now we will see how my music and the poet's words hang together," he continued, and in an unpleasant voice he began to try over some poetry of the order peculiar to comic opera and the lyric stage—

"The maid with the golden hair
Flings her mantilla by,
Then to the heavens so fair
Raises a tear-dimmed eye;
Then in the silvery wave
Rippling the lake so blue——

"What! what!" cried Schaunard, justly indignant. "A silvery wave in a blue lake. I never noticed that till now. Too romantic by half. After all, the poet is an idiot; he never saw silver nor yet a lake in his life. His ballad is stupid into the bargain; the length of his lines does not fit into my music. I shall compose my own words in future, which is to say that I mean to set about it, and that no later than at once. I feel I am in the vein. I will rough out some model couplets and adapt my tune to them afterwards."

Schaunard, with his head between his hands, assumed the pensive attitude proper to a mortal in commerce with the Muse. Then, after a few moments of this divine intercourse, he brought

into the world one of the misshapen conceptions known as dummy-verses, which librettists throw off with considerable facility, to serve as a provisional basis for the composer's art. Schaunard's dummy, however, was not devoid of common sense. It represented accurately enough the disturbance aroused in his brain by the brutal reality of the date—the 8th of April.

Here are the couplets—

Eight and eight make sixteen
(Six, and you carry the one);
Pleased and proud I had been
If, ere the quarter was done,
I had found some one to lend
(Somebody honest and poor)
Eight hundred francs to a friend;
I'd have paid up, I am sure.

REFRAIN.

Then, when a quarter to twelve
Sounds from the dial of Fate,
I'll go to my landlord myself (*thrice*),
And settle accounts up to date.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Schaunard, looking over his composition; "self and twelve! A beggarly pair of rhymes, but I have not time now to enrich them. Let us try the music wedded to the words."

Again he attacked his ballad, with a frightful nasal intonation peculiarly his own. The result was doubtless pleasing to him, for he hailed it with the jubilant grin which, like a circumflex accent, bestrode his visage whenever he was particularly pleased with himself. But his proud ecstasy was of short duration.

The Brotherhood

Eleven o'clock sounded from the neighbouring steeple. Every sonorous stroke, ringing through the miserable Schaunard's chamber, died away in mocking echoes that seemed to inquire, "Are you ready?"

He started violently on his chair.

"Time runs like a stag. I have to find seventy-five francs and new lodgings, and only three-quarters of an hour to do it in—which I never shall. It is altogether too much in the conjuring line. See here, I will give myself five minutes to find out how to do it," and, burying his head between his knees, he dived into the abysmal depths of reflection.

The five minutes went by. Schaunard lifted his head again, but he had found nothing that in the least resembled his seventy-five francs.

"If I am to get out of this there is precisely one way of setting about it, and that is to walk out quite naturally. My friend Chance may be taking a stroll outside in the sun; he surely will offer me hospitality until I can settle with M. Bernard."

So saying, Schaunard stuffed everything that could be stowed into his great-coat pockets (two receptacles capacious as cellars), tied up a selection of linen into a bundle, took leave of his room with a few words of farewell, and went downstairs.

The concierge seemed to be on the look-out, for he called across the yard to Schaunard, and barred his passage out.

"Hi! M. Schaunard. Can you have forgotten? To-day is the 8th."

"Eight and eight make sixteen
(Six, and you carry the one),"

hummed Schaunard. "It is the one thought in my mind."

"You are a little behindhand with your moving, and that is a fact," remarked the concierge. "It is half-past eleven; the new tenant may come in at any moment and want your room. You had better look sharp."

"Very well, then, just let me pass. I am going out to find a cart to remove my things."

"No doubt; but there is one little formality to discharge first. My orders are not to let you take away so much as a hair till you have paid up what you owe for the three last terms. You are ready to do so, I suppose?"

"Rather!" returned Schaunard, taking a step forward.

"Then, if you will step into my room, I will give you the receipts at once."

"I will look in for that when I come back."

"But why not now?" persisted the man.

"I am going out to get change."

"Oho! you are going out to get change, are you?" returned the other suspiciously. "Well, then, just to oblige you, I'll take care of that little bundle you have under your arm; you might find it in your way."

"*Monsieur le concierge!*" said Schaunard with much dignity, "is it possible that you harbour any suspicions of me? Can you suppose that I am capable of removing my furniture in a pocket-handkerchief?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the man, lowering his tone a little, "those are my orders. M. Bernard expressly forbade me to allow you to take away one hair until you had paid up."

"Now, just look," said Schaunard, untying his bundle, "there are no hairs here. These are shirts that I am taking to the laundress, not twenty paces away, next door to the money-changer's."

"That is another thing," the concierge admitted after a scrutiny of the contents. "If it's a fair question, M. Schaunard, may I ask for your new address?"

"I am staying in the Rue de Rivoli," Schaunard answered coolly; but by this time he had one foot in the street, and was out and away at his utmost speed.

"Rue de Rivoli," muttered the concierge with a finger to his nose, "Rue de Rivoli. It is very odd that anybody should let him take a room in the Rue de Rivoli without coming here to ask about him, very odd! After all, he can't take away his things, at any rate, without paying his rent. If only the new lodger does not come in just as M. Schaunard is going out. A pretty row there would be on the stairs! Hullo! just as I thought," he cried, suddenly popping his head out at the wicket, "here comes the new lodger himself."

A young man with a white Louis XIII. hat was, in fact, turning in under the archway, and behind him came a commissionaire who seemed to be by no means bending under his burden.

"Is my room at liberty?" inquired this person as the concierge came out to meet him.

"Not yet, sir, but it will be ready directly. The last tenant has gone out to find a cart to fetch his things. And in the meantime you can put your furniture down in the courtyard."

"I am afraid it will rain," returned the new tenant, placidly chewing the stalks of a bunch of violets that he held between his teeth, "and then my furniture would be damaged." He turned to the man behind him who certainly carried a load of objects of some kind, though the concierge would have been puzzled to tell exactly what they were. "Put them down here in the entrance," continued the man in the white hat, "and go back to my old lodgings for the rest of my valuable furniture and works of art."

The commissionaire accordingly proceeded to stack a series of canvas-covered frames against the wall. Each separate leaf was some six or seven feet high, and apparently, if they were put end to end, they might spread out to any required extent. Their owner tilted one of them forward and looked inside.

"Look here!" he cried, pointing to a notch torn in the canvas. "Here is a misfortune! You have cracked my great Venetian mirror! Next time try to mind what you are about, and be particularly careful of my book-case."

"What does he mean with his Venetian mirror?" muttered the concierge, peering suspiciously at the stack of frames. "There is no looking-glass there. It is a joke, of course; the thing looks like a screen to me. At any rate, we shall soon see what he brings next."

"Your lodger is going to let me have the room

directly, is he not? It is half-past twelve, I should be glad to move in," remarked the new tenant.

"I don't think he will be long now," said the concierge. "Besides, there's no harm done yet, seeing that your furniture is still to come," he added, laying some stress on the last few words. The young man was just about to reply when an orderly in dragoon's uniform entered the yard.

"M. Bernard?" inquired the dragoon, drawing a letter from a big leather pouch that flapped against him at every movement.

"This is where he lives."

"Then here is a letter for him. Give me a receipt for it," and he held out a printed form for signature.

"Excuse me," said the concierge as he retired into the house, addressing the owner of the frames, now tramping impatiently up and down the yard, "this is a letter from the Government, and I must go up to M. Bernard with it. He is my employer."

M. Bernard was in the act of shaving when his concierge appeared.

"What do you want, Durand?"

"An orderly has just come and brought this for you, sir," said Durand, removing his cap. "It is from the Government." As he spoke he held out an envelope stamped with the seal of the War Office.

M. Bernard grew so excited that he all but cut himself with his razor. "Good Lord!" cried he. "The War Office! I am sure it is my nomination as Chevalier of the Legion of Honour that I've been asking for this long while. My extreme respectability is meeting with recognition at last! Here,

Durand," he added, fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, "here are five francs for you. Go and drink my health. Stop a bit, though, I haven't my purse about me; you shall have it in a moment. Wait."

The concierge's experience of his employer left him quite unprepared for such an overwhelming outburst of generosity. He was so moved by it that he forgot himself and put his cap on again.

At any other moment M. Bernard would have dealt severely with this breach of the laws of the social hierarchy; but now it seemed to pass unperceived. He put on his spectacles, broke the seal with the respectful emotion of a vizier receiving a letter from the sultan, and began to read the document. At the very first line a ghastly grimace deepened little crimson wrinkles in the fat of his monk's jowl; his little eyes darted forth angry sparks that all but set the bristling tufts of his wig on fire, and by the time he had done, so chop-fallen was he, that an earthquake might have shaken every feature of his countenance.

These are the contents of the missive for which M. Durand had duly given the Government a receipt. *This* is the despatch indited upon War Office stationery, and brought at hot speed by a dragoon:—

"Sir and Landlord,—Policy, which, according to mythology, is the grandmother of good manners, compels me to inform you that a painful necessity forbids me to conform to the established usage of paying rent, more especially when rent is due. Until this morning I had cherished the hope that it might be in my power to celebrate this glorious day by discharging three quarters' arrears. Fond dream! chimerical

illusion! Even as I slumbered on the pillow of security, ill-luck (in Greek ανανκη)—ill-luck dispersed my hopes. The receipts on which I counted failed to make an appearance (heavens! how bad trade is just now!)—they failed to appear, I say, for out of very considerable sums owing to me I have so far received but three francs—and they were borrowed. I do not propose to offer them to you. Better days are in store, do not doubt it, sir, both for our fair France and for me. So soon as they shall dawn I will try to inform you of the fact, and to withdraw from your premises the valuables that I now leave in your keeping. To you, sir, I entrust them, and to the protection of the enactment which forbids you to dispose of them within a twelvemonth, should you feel tempted to try that method of recovering the sums for which you stand credited on the ledger page of my scrupulous integrity. My pianoforte I recommend particularly to your care, as also the large picture-frame containing sixty specimen locks of hair of every shade of capillary hue, each one shorn from the brows of the Graces by the scalpel of Eros.

"So, sir, my landlord, you are free to dispose of the roof that erewhile sheltered me. I hereby grant permission to that effect. Witness my hand and seal.

"ALEXANDRE SCHAUNARD."

Schaunard had gone to a friend, a clerk in the War Department, and written the epistle in his office.

When M. Bernard had read this missive to the end he crumpled it up indignantly. Then, as his eyes fell on old Durand, who stood waiting for the promised five francs, he asked him roughly what he was doing there.

"Waiting, sir."

"For what?"

"Why, sir, you were so generous; er—er—the good news, sir!" stammered out the concierge.

"Get out! What, you rascal, do you stand and speak to me with your head covered?"

"But, sir——"

"Don't answer me. There. No, wait a bit though. We will go up to that scoundrelly artist's room. He has gone off without paying his rent."

"What!" cried Durand. "*M. Schaunard?*"

"Yes," said the landlord, his fury rising like Nicollet in a *crescendo*. "Yes. And if he has taken a single thing with him, out you go. Do you understand? Out you go-o-o!"

"It can't be," the poor concierge muttered. "M. Schaunard has not moved out. He went out for change to pay you, sir, and to order a cart round to fetch his things."

"Fetch his things!" screamed M. Bernard. "Quick! he is up there after it now, I'll be bound. He set the trap to get you out of the way, and did the trick! idiot that you are!"

"Oh, Lord! idiot that I am!" cried old Durand, and, quaking from head to foot before the Olympian wrath of his betters, he was dragged down the staircase.

Arrived in the courtyard, Durand was hailed at once by the young fellow in the white hat.

"Look here, concierge," cried he, "am I going to be put in possession of my room? Is to-day the 8th of April? Did I engage the lodgings here and pay you the luck-penny, or did I not?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, I am at your service," broke in the landlord. "Durand, I shall speak to this gentleman myself. Go upstairs. That scoundrel Schaunard is there packing up his things, no doubt. Lock him in, if you can catch him, and then go out for the police."

Old Durand disappeared up the staircase. The landlord and the new-comer were left together.

"I beg your pardon, sir," M. Bernard began, "but to whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

"I am your new tenant, sir. I engaged a room here on the sixth floor, and I am beginning to grow impatient because I can't move in."

"You find me in despair," exclaimed M. Bernard. "A difficulty has arisen between me and one of my tenants; in fact, the tenant whom you are about to replace."

A voice sounded from above; it came from a window on the top story.

"M. Bernard, sir!" shouted old Durand. "M. Schaunard isn't here! But his room is here! (Idiot that I am!) I mean to say he hasn't taken anything away—not a single hair, M. Bernard, sir!"

"That is right. Come down," called M. Bernard. Then, addressing the young man, "Dear me! have a little patience, I beg. My man shall stow all the insolvent lodger's furniture in the cellar, and you shall move in in half an hour. Besides, your own furniture isn't here yet."

"I beg your pardon, sir," the new-comer returned placidly. M. Bernard took a look about him, but he saw nothing save the huge screens that had previously made his concierge uneasy.

"Eh, what? I beg your pardon. Eh? I don't see any," he murmured.

"Look," returned the other, and he opened out the leaves of the screen, displaying to the landlord's gaze a palatial interior full of jasper

pillars and bas-reliefs and pictures by great masters.

"But—your furniture?"

"Here it is," and, with a wave of the hand, he indicated the sumptuous splendours of the painted palace, part of a set of decorations for the amateur stage, a recent purchase at the Hotel Bullion.

"I am pleased to believe, sir, that you have something more solid in the way of furniture than *that*."

"What, genuine Boule!"

"I must have some guarantee for my rent, you understand."

"The deuce! Isn't a palace good enough to cover the rent of a garret?"

"No, sir. I must have furniture—genuine mahogany furniture."

"Alas! yet neither gold nor mahogany can make us happy, to quote the ancients. And, speaking for myself, I cannot endure it. Mahogany is a stupid sort of wood; everybody has mahogany!"

"But after all, sir, you have some furniture of some kind, I suppose?"

"No. It fills up the space till there is no room for anything else. As soon as you bring chairs into a place you do not know where to sit."

"Still, you have a bedstead? How do you lie down at night?"

"I lie down trusting in Providence, sir."

"I beg your pardon, one more question. What is your profession, if you please?"

At that very moment in walked the commissionaire for the second time. Among the various objects

slung over his shoulders appeared an unmistakable easel. Old Durand pointed this out in dismay to the landlord.

"Oh, sir, he is a painter!"

"An artist! I knew it!" M. Bernard exclaimed in his turn (and the hairs of his wig stood upright with fright). "An artist!!! But" (turning to the concierge) "did you not make any inquiries about this gentleman? Did you not know what he did?"

"Lord, sir, he gave me five francs for my luck-penny; how was I to imagine that——"

"When you have done," began the owner of the easel, but M. Bernard adjusted his spectacles on his nose with aplomb.

"Sir," said he, "since you have no furniture you cannot move it in. I am legally entitled to decline a lodger who brings no guarantee."

"And how about my word?" the artist inquired with dignity.

"It is no equivalent for furniture. You can look for lodgings somewhere else. Durand shall give you back your luck-penny."

"Eh?" cried the dumbfounded concierge, "I paid it into the savings-bank."

"But I cannot find another lodging all in a minute," objected he of the hat. "Let me have a day's shelter, at any rate."

"Go to the hotel," returned M. Bernard. "By-the-by," he added quickly as a sudden thought struck him, "I will let you have the room furnished if you like. My insolvent lodger's things are up there. Only the rent, as you know, in such cases is paid in advance."

"The question is how much you want for the den," said the artist, seeing there was no other way out of it.

"But it is a very good room; the rent will be twenty-five francs a month, under the circumstances. You pay in advance."

"So you have said already; the phrase hardly deserves the honour of an encore." He fell to fumbling in his pockets. "Have you change for five hundred francs?"

"Eh? what?" exclaimed his amazed landlord.

"Oh, well, call it half a thousand, then. Have you never seen such a thing before?" continued the artist, waving the note before the eyes of landlord and concierge. The latter appeared to lose his balance completely at the sight.

"I will give you change," M. Bernard began respectfully. "There will only be twenty francs to take, since Durand is giving you back your luck-penny."

"He may keep it," said the artist, "on condition that he will come up every morning to tell me the day of the week, the day of the month, the quarter of the moon, and what kind of a day it is, and what form of government we are living under."

"Oh, sir!" cried old Durand, bowing to an angle of ninety degrees.

"All right, my good fellow, you will act as my almanack. And in the meantime you will help my commissionaire with the moving in."

"I will send you your receipt directly, sir," added the landlord. And that very evening Marcel the painter was installed as M. Bernard's new lodger.

Schaunard had fled, and his garret was transformed into a palace.

The said Schaunard, meanwhile, was beating up Paris for money.

Schaunard had elevated borrowing into a fine art. Foreseeing that it might be necessary to "oppress" foreigners, he had learned the requisite formulæ for borrowing five francs in every language under the sun. He had made a profound study of the whole repertory of ruses by which the precious metals are wont to escape their pursuers. No pilot is better acquainted with the state of the tides than he with the times of low and high water; which is to say, the days when his friends and acquaintances were sure to be in funds. So much so, indeed, that if he were seen entering any particular house, people would say, not "There is M. Schaunard," but, "To-day is the first, or the fifteenth of the month." Partly to facilitate the collection of this kind of tithe which he levied when hard up, partly to spread it evenly over the area of persons capable of meeting the call, Schaunard had drawn up alphabetical lists of all his acquaintances, and tabulated them under the headings of quarters and arrondissements. Opposite each name he set down the highest possible sum that he could expect to borrow in proportion to the owner's means, the dates when he was in funds, a time-table of meals, together with the probable bill of fare. Schaunard kept besides a little set of books in perfect order, in which he entered all the sums that he borrowed down to the most minute fractions, for he had no mind to burden himself with debt beyond a certain

figure, and the amount of that figure still hung on the pen of an uncle in Normandy whose property he was one day to inherit. So soon as Schaunard owed twenty francs to any one individual, he stopped borrowing and repaid the money in a lump, even if he had to borrow from others to whom he owed smaller amounts. In this way he always kept up a certain credit on the market, which credit he was pleased to style his "floating debt," and as it was known that he invariably paid his debts so soon as his resources permitted him to do so, people were very ready to oblige him whenever they could.

But to-day, since eleven o'clock in the morning when he started out to scrape together those seventy-five indispensable francs, he had only succeeded in making up one poor little five-franc piece. This had been done with the collaboration of the letters M V and R on his famous list; all the rest of the alphabet was passing through a precisely similar crisis, and this brought his quest to an end.

By six o'clock a ferocious appetite was ringing the dinner-bell within, and he had reached the Barrière du Maine, where the letter U was domiciled. Schaunard had a serviette ring in U's establishment, whenever there were serviettes. The porter called after him as he went past.

"Where are you going, sir?"

"Up to M. U——."

"He is out."

"And madame?"

"She is out too. They went out to dinner and

left a message with me for one of their friends who was sure to come this evening, they said. In fact they were expecting you, and this is the address they left with me," added the porter, holding out a scrap of paper.

Schaunard read these words in his friend U's handwriting:—

"Gone to dine with Schaunard, Rue—— Come and look us up."

"Well, well," thought he as he went away, "when chance comes in pretty tricks he plays!"

Then Schaunard bethought himself of a little eating-house only a few steps away, where he had made a meal once or twice before for a trifling sum. To this establishment, known to lower Bohemia as *La Mère Cadet*, he now betook himself. *La Mère Cadet*, half tavern, half restaurant, situated in the Chaussée du Maine, is patronised largely by carters of the Orléans Road with a sprinkling of *cantatrices* from Montparnasse and first walking gentlemen from Bobino's. In summer the place is crammed with young aspirants from studios round about the Luxembourg, literary gentlemen unknown to fame, and scribblers attached to more or less mysterious journals, who flock to *La Mère Cadet*, famous for stewed rabbit, genuine sauerkraut and a thin white wine with a smack of brimstone.

Two or three stunted trees spread a few sickly green leaves over the heads of diners in the establishment; and beneath the shadow of these shrubs, known to frequenters of *La Mère Cadet* as "the grove," Schaunard now took his place.

"My word! what must be, must!" said he to

himself. "Now for a blow-out, a private jollification all to myself."

And without more ado, he called for soup, a half portion of sauerkraut and two half portions of stewed rabbit; having remarked that in this case two halves are greater than the whole by at least a quarter.

His order attracted the attention of a young person in white, with a wreath of orange blossoms in her hair; she wore dancing slippers, and a veil of imitated imitation floated over a pair of shoulders which might have been suffered to preserve their incognito. She was a singer from the Théâtre Montparnasse, where the wings are entrances, as one may say, of *La Mère Cadet's* kitchen. The lady having stepped in for refreshments between the acts of *Lucia di Lammermoor* was taking a half-cup of coffee, after a dinner composed simply and solely of an artichoke with oil and vinegar.

"Two portions of stewed rabbit, the dog!" she muttered to the waitress, "the young man goes in for high feeding. What is to pay, Adèle?"

"One artichoke, four; one half-cup, four; and bread, one sou. Nine sous altogether."

"Here it is," returned the vocalist, and out she went, humming, "*Cet amour que Dieu me donne.*"

"I say! She can take the *la!*" remarked a mysterious individual sitting at Schaunard's table behind a rampart of old books.

"Take it!" ejaculated Schaunard. "I rather think she takes it and keeps it to herself. Besides," he added, pointing to the plate on which Lucia di Lammermoor had just partaken of her artichoke,

"nobody has any idea what it is to steep your head-notes in vinegar."

"It is a powerful acid, and that is a fact," admitted the other. "The city of Orleans produces a brand which justly enjoys a great reputation."

Schaunard took a closer look at this person, who angled thus for conversation. The fixed gaze of the man's big blue eyes, which always seemed to be looking out for something, gave to his face that expression of smug serenity which you may remark in the visages of seminarists. His complexion was of the colour of old ivory, except for a dab of opaque brick-red upon the cheeks; his mouth might have been drawn by a student of the first principles of design (if somebody had given a jog to the draughtsman's elbow). The lips turned up a little, negro-fashion, disclosing a set of dog's teeth; the double chin below reposed on the folds of a white cravat tied so that one end menaced the firmament while the other pointed to earth. The hair of this personage flowed in a yellow torrent from under the prodigious brim of a tawny-brown felt hat. He wore a long, nut-brown overcoat with a cape, a threadbare garment, rough as a nutmeg-grater. A mass of papers and pamphlets protruded from its yawning pockets. He sat with a book propped up before him on the table, careless of Schaunard's scrutiny, eating his *choucroûte garnie* with evident relish, for sounds of unqualified satisfaction escaped him at frequent intervals; and now again, taking a pencil from behind his ear, he jotted down a note in the margin of the work which he was perusing.

Schaunard all at once struck his knife against a

glass. "How about my stewed rabbit, eh?" he called.

The waitress came up with a plate in her hand.

"Monsieur," she said, "stewed rabbit is off the bill. Here is the last portion, and this gentleman ordered it," she added, setting it down in front of the man of books.

"*Sacrebleu!*" cried Schaunard. And in that "Sacrebleu" there was such a depth of melancholy disappointment that it went to the heart of the man of books. He effected a breach in the rampart of volumes, and pushed the plate through the gap, saying in his most dulcet tones—

"May I venture, monsieur, to entreat you to share this dish with me?"

"I cannot think of depriving you of it, monsieur."

"Then would you deprive me of the pleasure of obliging you, monsieur?"

"Since you put it so, monsieur——" And Schaunard held out his plate.

"With your permission," observed the stranger, "I will not offer you the head."

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed Schaunard, "I shall not be the loser."

But drawing back his plate he perceived that the stranger had helped him to the very morsel which he particularly desired (so he said) to keep for himself.

"Well, well," Schaunard growled inwardly, "what was he after, with his politeness?"

"If the head is the noblest part of man," continued the other, "it is the most disagreeable member of the rabbit. So a great many persons cannot en-

dure it. With me it is different; I am extremely fond of it."

"In that case I feel the liveliest regret that you should have deprived yourself on my account."

"What? Pardon me," said the man of books, "I kept the head for myself. I even had the honour to observe to you that——"

"Allow me," said Schaunard, pushing his plate across for inspection. "What is this morsel?"

"Just heaven! What do I see? Ye gods! What, another head! 'Tis a bicephalous rabbit!"

"Bi——?"

"—cephalous. From the Greek. Indeed M. de Buffon (he who always wrote in full dress) cites examples of this natural curiosity. Well, upon my word! I am not sorry to have partaken of the phenomenon."

Thanks to this incident, conversation did not languish. Schaunard, not to be behindhand in civility, called for an extra bottle. The bookman ordered another. Schaunard contributed a salad to the feast; the bookman, dessert. By eight o'clock there were six empty bottles on the table. Communicativeness, watered by libations of thin liquor, had brought them both insensibly to the point of autobiography, and they were as well acquainted as if they had been brought up together. The bookman having listened to Schaunard's confidences, informed him in return that his name was Gustave Colline, that he exercised the profession of philosopher, and made a living by giving instruction in mathematics, pedagogy, botany and numerous other sciences which end in *y*.

What little money Colline made by giving lessons at pupils' residences, he spent upon old books. His long, nut-brown overcoat was known to every book-stall on the quays from the Pont de la Concorde to the Pont Saint Michel, where his purchases were so numerous that it would have taken a lifetime and more to read them through. Nobody, he himself least of all, could tell what he did with his books. But the hobby had grown to the dimensions of a passion, so that if he chanced to go home at night without a new acquisition, he would adopt the saying of the Emperor Titus, and cry, "I have lost the day!" Schaunard was so fascinated by his engaging manners, by his talk (a mosaic of every known style), and by the atrocious puns which enlivened his conversation, that he asked leave on the spot to add Colline's name to the famous list mentioned above. And when they left *La Mère Cadet*, towards nine o'clock, they had, to every appearance, carried on a dialogue with the bottle, and were passably disguised in liquor.

Colline proposed a cup of coffee, Schaunard agreed on condition that he should provide liqueurs. They turned accordingly into a café, at the sign of "Momus," god of Sports and Laughter,* in the Rue Saint Germain l'Auxerrois.

A lively discussion was going on, as they entered, between two frequenters of that public establishment. One of these was a young man whose face was completely lost to sight in the depths of an enormous bushy beard of various shades of colour. By way of contrast, however, to this prodigious

* See CHAMPFLEURY, *Les Confessions de Sylvius.*

growth on cheek and chin, premature baldness, setting in above, had left his forehead as bare as a knee, save for a few straggling hairs (so few that you might count them), which strove in vain to hide its nakedness. A black coat, tonsured at the elbows, gave glimpses of other openings for ventilation at the armholes, whenever the wearer raised his arms; his trousers might possibly have been black, once; but his boots had never been new, the Wandering Jew might have tramped two or three times round the world in them already.

Schaunard noticed that his friend Colline exchanged a greeting with this person.

"Do you know that gentleman?" he asked the philosopher.

"Not exactly," returned the other, "only I come across him sometimes at the Library. I believe he is a literary man."

"His coat looks like it, at all events."

The individual engaged in argument with the owner of the beard was a man of forty or so, marked out by nature, as it would seem, for an apoplectic seizure, to judge from the big head which reposed between his shoulders, without a neck between. "Idiocy" might be read in capital letters on the flattened forehead under his skull cap. M. Mouton—for that was his name—was registrar of deaths at the mayor's office, in the Fourth Arrondissement.

"M. Rodolphe!" he was exclaiming in a falsetto voice, while he seized the young man with a beard by a button and shook him, "do you wish to have my opinion? Very well. All the newspapers are

good for nothing. Look you here! Suppose now —I am the father of a family, hey? Good! And I drop into a café for a game of dominoes. Do you *follow me?*"

"Go on, go on," said the person addressed as M. Rodolphe.

"Well," continued old Mouton, punctuating his remarks by bringing his fist down on the table with a bang that set all the glasses and pint-pots trembling. "Well, I take a look at the papers. Good! What do I find? One says 'white' and another 'black.' Fiddle-diddle! What is that to me? I am a sober father of a family, coming here for——"

"A game of dominoes."

"Every evening. Very well. Now, suppose, for the sake of saying something—you understand?"

"Very well," said Rodolphe.

"I read an article that I don't agree with. That puts me in a fury; I get all of a fluster, because, look you, the newspapers are full of lies from beginning to end. Yes, lies!" shrieked he in the shrillest, squeakiest notes of his squeaky voice, "and journalists are bandits, a set of paltry scriveners!"

"Still, M. Mouton——"

"Aye, bandits! They are at the bottom of everybody's troubles; they got up the Revolution and the *assignats.* Murat, now; there's proof for you."

"I beg your pardon," put in Rodolphe, "you mean Marat."

"No, no, not at all. I mean *Murat,* for I saw his funeral myself as a boy——"

"I assure you——"

"The same that they made a play about at the Cirque. So there!"

"Well, well, just so. Murat it is."

"Why, what have I been telling you this hour past?" cried the persistent Mouton. "Murat that used to write in a cellar, eh? Well, suppose now—weren't the Bourbons in the right of it to guillotine him when he was playing them false?"

"Guillotine him? Who? Played them false—what!" exclaimed Rodolphe, buttonholing M. Mouton in his turn.

"Oh, well, Marat."

"No, no, not at all, M. Mouton. You mean *Murat!* Hang it all! Let us know what we are talking about."

"Certainly. Marat, and a low scoundrel he was. Betrayed the Emperor in 1815. That is what makes me say that all newspapers are alike," added M. Mouton, returning to the theme which he had quitted for what he called an explanation. "For my own part, do you know what I should like, M. Rodolphe? Well, let us suppose now—I should like a good newspaper. Oh, not a big one. *Good.* No set phrases—that's it!"

"You are very hard to please," put in Rodolphe. "A newspaper without set phrases!"

"Well, yes; are you following my idea?"

"I am trying to."

"A newspaper that just lets you know how the King is and about the crops. For after all, what is the good of all your gazettes, when nobody can make anything out of them? Suppose now that

I am in the mayor's office, am I not? I am registrar. Good! Well, it is as if people came and said to me, 'M. Mouton, you register deaths; very well, do this and do that.' Very well; what this, eh? and that, eh? Well, and it is the same thing with the newspapers," he concluded.

"Evidently," put in a neighbour, who had understood him. And M. Mouton went back to his game of dominoes amid the congratulations of those who shared his opinions.

"I have put him in his place," he remarked, indicating Rodolphe, who had gone to join Schaunard and Colline at their table.

"What a dolt!" said Colline, glancing across at the registrar.

"He has a good head, with his eyelids like a carriage-hood, and eyes like loto-knobs," remarked Schaunard, drawing out a wonderfully coloured cutty-pipe.

"By Jove, monsieur, you have a very pretty pipe there!" remarked Rodolphe.

"Oh, I have a still better one for great occasions," Schaunard answered carelessly. "Just pass me the tobacco, Colline."

"There!" cried the philosopher, "I have none left."

"Allow me," said Rodolphe, pulling a packet out of his pocket and laying it on the table.

Colline thought he ought to respond to this act of courtesy by the offer of a drink.

Rodolphe accepted. The conversation turned upon literature. Rodolphe, questioned as to his profession, confessed (for his clothes betrayed him) to his relations with the Muses, and stood drinks all round.

The waiter was going to take the bottle away, but Schaunard requested him to be so kind as to overlook it. Two five-franc pieces were jingling in one of Colline's pockets, and the silvery sound of the duet had reached Schaunard's ears. Rodolphe meanwhile quickly overtook his friends, reached the point of expansiveness, and poured out confidences in his turn.

The trio would, no doubt, have spent the rest of the night in the café, if they had not been requested to leave. Outside in the street, they had scarcely gone ten paces (which distance was accomplished in about a quarter of an hour) when they were overtaken by a deluge of rain. Colline and Rodolphe lived at opposite ends of Paris; the former in the Ile Saint Louis, the latter at Montmartre. As for Schaunard, he had completely forgotten that he had no lodging at all, and offered his friends hospitality.

"Come home with me," he said; "I lodge near by, and we will spend the night in talking literature and art."

"You shall play for us," said Colline, "and Rodolphe will recite his own poetry."

"Faith, yes," added Schaunard, "we must laugh; we can only live once."

Schaunard had some little difficulty in recognising his house; but arrived in front of it, he sat down for a moment on a kerbstone, while his friends went over to a wine-shop, which still kept open, in search of the first elements of supper. On their return Schaunard rapped several times on the door, for he had a dim recollection that the porters always kept him waiting. At last it opened. Old Durand, in

the balmy depths of his beauty sleep, forgot that Schaunard had ceased to be an inmate of his house, and heard the name called without putting himself out in the least.

The ascent of the stairs was a slow and no less difficult business. Schaunard went first, but on arriving on the top landing he found a key already in the lock of his door, and uttered a cry of astonishment.

"What is the matter?" asked Rodolphe.

"I can make nothing of this," murmured Schaunard; "the key that I carried off with me this morning is here sticking in the lock! Ha! we shall soon see. I put it in my pocket. Eh, by Jove! and here it is, too!" he cried, holding it up.

"It is witchcraft!"

"It is a phantasmagoria!" (from Colline).

"A fancy!" (from Rodolphe).

"But," demurred Schaunard, with growing terror audible in his voice, "but, do you hear that?"

"What?"

"What?"

"My piano, playing all by itself—*ut, la, mi, ré, do, la, si, sol, ré.* Rascally *ré*, that it is! It never will keep in tune."

"This is not your room, of course," said Rodolphe; and leaning heavily on Colline, he whispered, "he is drunk."

"I think so. In the first place, that is not a piano; it is a flute."

"Why, you are drunk too, my dear fellow," said the poet to the philosopher, who by this time was sitting on the floor. "It is a violin!"

"A v—— fiddle-de-dee! I say, Schaunard,"

stammered Colline, pulling his friend by the legs, "that is good, is that! Here is this gentleman saying that it is a vio——"

"Confound it!" cried Schaunard, frightened out of his wits, "there is my piano playing away; it is witchcraft!"

"Phantasma—goria!" howled Colline, letting a bottle fall on the floor.

"Fancy!" yelled Rodolphe in his turn.

In the middle of the hubbub the door suddenly opened, and somebody appeared upon the threshold, holding a candle-sconce in which three pink candles were burning.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" he asked, bowing politely to the three friends.

"Oh, heaven! What have I done? I have made a mistake. This isn't my room," exclaimed Schaunard.

"Be so good as to excuse my friend, monsieur," cried Rodolphe and Colline, speaking both at once. "He is more than half seas over."

All at once a gleam of lucidity crossed Schaunard's tipsy brain; he had just read an inscription chalked upon his door:—

"*I have been here three times for my New Year's gift.* "PHEMIE."

"Yes," cried he, "I do live here. That is the very visiting card which Phémie left me on New Year's Day. This is my door; it is, indeed."

"Dear me, monsieur," protested Rodolphe, "I feel truly confused."

"Believe me, monsieur," Colline added, "my

friend in his confusion has in me an energetic collaborator."

The man in the doorway burst out laughing in spite of himself.

"If you will step into my room for a moment," he said, "your friend will find out his mistake, no doubt, as soon as he sees the place."

"With pleasure." And the poet, taking one of Schaunard's arms and the philosopher the other, they brought him into the room, or, to be accurate, into Marcel's palace, which the reader has doubtless recognised.

Schaunard, gazing vaguely about him, muttered—

"It is astonishing how the place is improved."

"Well, are you convinced now?" asked Colline.

But Schaunard had caught sight of the piano, and going up to it, tried over a scale or two.

"Eh! just listen to that now, all of you!" he said, striking chord after chord. "That is right! The animal knows its master: *si la sol, fa mi ré.* Ah, rascally *ré!* Always the same, that it is! I told you it was my piano."

"He persists," said Colline to Rodolphe.

"He persists," said Rodolphe, turning to Marcel.

"*That* now," added Schaunard, pointing to the spangled petticoat lying on a chair, "that is not my ornament, perhaps? Oho!"

And he looked Marcel between the eyes.

"And that——" he continued, pulling down the summons, of which mention has been made previously, and proceeding to read it aloud—

"'Wherefore M. Schaunard is bound to remove his effects, and to leave the premises in tenantable

repair, before noon on the eighth day of April. Due notice having been served on him by me, for which the cost is five francs.' Aha! so I am not M. Schaunard, who was served with a notice by a bailiff, and received the honour of a stamp worth five francs? There again!" he cried, as he caught sight of his slippers on Marcel's feet, "so those are not my Turkish slippers which beloved hands bestowed on me? Monsieur," he added, addressing Marcel, "will you in your turn explain your presence among my *Lares?*"

"Gentlemen," replied Marcel, addressing himself more particularly to Colline and Rodolphe, "this gentleman" (indicating Schaunard) "is, I confess, in his own room."

"Ha!" cried Schaunard, "that is lucky!"

"But," resumed Marcel, "so am I."

"Still, monsieur," Rodolphe broke in, "if our friend recognises——"

"Yes," said Colline, "if our friend——"

"And if you on your side recollect," added Rodolphe, "how comes it that——"

"Yes," echoed Colline, "how comes it——"

"Will you kindly sit down, gentlemen?" replied Marcel, "and I will clear up the mystery."

"Suppose we moisten the explanation?" hazarded Colline.

"And take a bit to eat," added Rodolphe.

With that they all four sat down to table and attacked the piece of cold veal bought at the wine-shop, while Marcel proceeded to narrate what had passed that morning between him and the landlord when he came to move in.

"So," said Rodolphe, "this gentleman is perfectly right. This is his room."

"Pray consider yourself at home in it," Marcel returned politely.

But it was only after immense trouble that Schaunard could be got to understand what had happened, and a comical incident still further complicated matters. Schaunard was looking for something in a wall cupboard when he came upon some money; it was the change which M. Bernard had given for the five-hundred franc bill.

"Ah, I knew it!" he cried; "I knew that Chance would not leave me in the lurch! I remember now! I went out this morning to look him up. He must have come in while I was out, as it was quarter-day. We crossed each other on the way, that is all. What a good thing I left the key in the drawer!"

"Sweet delusion!" murmured Rodolphe, as he saw Schaunard dividing the coins into equal piles.

"Illusion, delusion, such is life!" added the philosopher.

Marcel laughed.

An hour later all four were fast asleep.

Next day at noon they awoke, and at first seemed very much surprised at the company in which they found themselves. Schaunard, Colline and Rodolphe looked as though they had never met before, and addressed each other as "Monsieur." Marcel was obliged to remind them that they all came in together the night before.

Old Durand came in at that very moment.

"Monsieur," said he, addressing Marcel, "to-day

is the ninth of April, eighteen hundred and forty . . . the streets are muddy, and His Majesty Louis Philippe is still King of France and Navarre. What next!" he exclaimed, catching sight of his former lodger. "M. Schaunard! Why how did you get in?"

"By telegraph," said Schaunard.

"But I say," continued old Durand, "you are a droll one, you are——"

"Durand," said Marcel, "I do not care to have my man-servant join in conversation when I am present. Go to the restaurant near by and order in breakfast for four persons. Here is the menu," he added, holding out a slip of paper. "Now go."

"You invited me to supper last night, gentlemen," Marcel went on, addressing his visitors, "allow me to offer you luncheon this morning, not in my room, but in yours," he added, holding out his hand to Schaunard.

Luncheon over, Rodolphe asked permission to speak.

"Gentlemen," he began, "permit me to leave you——"

"Oh, no," Schaunard said in a sentimental tone, "let us never part again!"

"True, it is very pleasant here," assented Colline.

"—— to leave you for a moment," continued Rodolphe. "The *Iris*, a journal devoted to the fashions, appears to-morrow. I, as editor, must go and correct my proofs, but I will be back in an hour."

"The deuce!" cried Colline, "that reminds me

I have a lesson to give to an Indian prince who has come to Paris to learn Arabic."

"You can go to-morrow," said Marcel.

"Oh no, the prince ought to pay me to-day. And besides, I must confess that this beautiful day would be completely spoilt for me if I did not take a look round the second-hand book market."

"But you are coming back?" queried Schaunard.

"With the swiftness of a dart sped by a sure hand," returned the philosopher, who loved eccentric metaphors.

And he went out with Rodolphe. Schaunard and Marcel were left alone together.

"By-the-by," remarked the former, "how if instead of reclining upon the pillow of *far niente* I should issue forth in quest of gold wherewith to allay M. Bernard's cupidity?"

"Why, do you still contemplate moving out?" Marcel asked uneasily.

"Lord! yes, there is no help for it," said Schaunard. "I have had notice to quit served on me by a bailiff at a cost of five francs."

"But if you are moving out, are you going to take away your furniture?"

"That is what I purpose to do; I am not going to leave a hair, as M. Bernard says."

"The devil! then I shall be in a fix," said Marcel, "for I took your room as a furnished apartment."

"Stay a bit, though! true; aye, so it is," returned Schaunard. "Pshaw," he added ruefully, "there is nothing to show that I shall find my seventy francs to-day, or to-morow, or the next day."

"Hold on, though," cried Marcel, "I have an idea."

"Produce it," said Schaunard.

"This is the situation: legally speaking, this lodging is mine, for I paid a month's rent in advance."

"The room, yes; but as to the furniture, if I pay I have a legal right to remove it; and if I could, I would even remove it illegally," said Schaunard.

"So as it stands," continued Marcel, "you have furniture, and nowhere to put it; and I have a room, and nothing to put in it."

"That is it."

"For my own part, I like this room," continued Marcel.

"So do I," put in Schaunard, "never liked it like this before."

"What do you say?"

"Liked it like, for liked it so much. Oh, I know my native language!"

"Well, so we can settle these matters," Marcel went on. "Stay with me; I will find the lodgings, and you shall find the furniture."

"And how about the rent?"

"I will pay what is owing, as I have money just now. It will be your turn next time. Consider it."

"I never consider anything, especially if it is an offer that suits me. I accept out of hand. Music and painting are, in fact, sisters."

"Sisters-in-law," * rejoined Marcel, and at that moment Colline and Rodolphe came in together. They had met on the way.

* *Belle-sœurs.*

"Gentlemen," cried Rodolphe, jingling the money in his pockets, "I propose that those present should dine with me."

"That is precisely what I was about to have the honour to propose myself," said Colline, pulling a gold piece out of his pocket and sticking it in his eye. "My prince gave me this to buy a Hindostanee-Arabic grammar, for which I have just paid six sous sterling."

"And I got the cashier of the *Iris* to let me have thirty francs in advance, on the pretext that I wanted the money to get myself vaccinated."

"It is pay day, it seems," remarked Schaunard, "I am the only one that has not taken handsel. It is humiliating."

"Meantime, my offer of dinner is still open," repeated Rodolphe.

"So is mine," said Colline.

"Very well, let us toss to see who shall pay the bill."

"No," cried Schaunard, "I know a better way than that; an infinitely better way of getting out of the difficulty."

"Let us see it!"

"Rodolphe shall give the dinner and Colline will entertain us at supper."

"That is what I call the wisdom of Solomon," cried the philosopher.

"It is worse than Gamacho's wedding-feast," added Marcel.

The dinner duly took place in a Provençal restaurant in the Rue Dauphine, well known for its *ayoli* and the literary tastes of its waiters. As

it was expedient to leave room for supper, they ate and drank in moderation. The acquaintance begun the previous evening between Colline and Schaunard, and later still with Marcel, was ripening into intimacy. Each one of the party hoisted the flag of his opinions on art, and all four discovered that they possessed the same courage and the same hope. In the course of chat and discussion they perceived that they had sympathies in common; they all had the same turn for the light and dexterous word-play which raises laughter and leaves no wounds; and lastly, that all the fair virtues of youth had by no means departed from them and left their hearts empty, for they were readily moved by anything beautiful which they heard or saw. And since all four had left a common starting-point to reach the same goal, it seemed to them that it was something more than a mere everyday *quid pro quo* of Chance, which had brought them thus together; was it not quite possible that it might be Providence, who watches over those left to themselves, that had joined their hands and whispered in their ears the Evangelist's words, "Love one another. Bear ye one another's burdens," sayings which ought to constitute the one and only Charter of Humanity?

The end of the meal found them almost grave. When Rodolphe got up and proposed that they should drink to the Future, Colline replied with a little speech that certainly was not taken out of an old book, nor had any pretension to style. He spoke quite simply in that artless vernacular which tells so well what is said so ill.

"What a fool the philosopher is!" muttered Schaunard, bending over his glass. "He has made me mix water with my wine."

After dinner they went to the *Café à Momus*, where they had spent the previous evening. From that day the establishment became uninhabitable for the rest of its patrons.

Coffee and liqueurs despatched, the Bohemian clan (now definitely founded) returned to Marcel's quarters, which received the name of "Schaunard's Elysium." Colline went out to order the promised supper, and the rest, meanwhile, provided themselves with crackers, rockets, and other pyrotechnical devices. These they let off from the windows before sitting down to supper; and the magnificent display fairly turned the house upside down, the four friends singing at the top of their voices—

"Let us celebrate this great day!"

Next morning they again found themselves together, but this time it did not cause them any astonishment. Before separating for the business of the day they shared a frugal lunch at the *Café Momus*, where they agreed to meet again in the evening. For a long time they kept to this daily routine.

These then are the characters who will pass in and out of the short stories which form this book. It is not a novel, and has no other pretension than that indicated by its title, for the Scenes of Bohemian Life are but studies of people belonging to a class hitherto misunderstood, whose chief fault is irregularity. Still, they can say in excuse that this irregularity is a necessity of their life.

II

A MESSENGER OF PROVIDENCE

SCHAUNARD and Marcel, after working valiantly all the morning, had come to a sudden stop.

"How hungry it is, by Jove!" exclaimed Schaunard; then he added carelessly, "is there not to be any lunch to-day?"

Never was question more inopportunely raised, and Marcel seemed very much astonished by it.

"Since when have we begun to lunch two days in succession?" he demanded. "Yesterday was Thursday." And he rounded out this observation by pointing with his mahl-stick to the commandment of the Church—

> "Thou shalt eat no meat of a Friday,
> Nor anything resembling thereunto."

Schaunard, having no answer to make to this, betook himself again to his picture, which represented a plain with a blue tree and a red tree stretching out their branches to shake hands with one another—a transparent allusion to the delights of friendship which, notwithstanding, contained a good deal of philosophy.

Just at that moment someone knocked at the door; it was the porter with a letter for Marcel.

"Three sous to pay," added the man.

"Are you sure?" asked the artist. "Good, then

we will owe you the money," and he shut the door in his face.

Marcel meanwhile had broken the seal. At the very first words he began to skip like an acrobat about the studio, thundering out with all his might the following well-known ballad, which, with him, denoted the highest possible pitch of jubilation—

"'There were four young men of the neighbourhood,
Who all fell ill, as I've understood;
So they took them off to the hospital—
Al! al! al! al!'"

"Well, yes," said Schaunard, taking it up.

"'They laid them all in a full-sized bed,
Two at the foot and two at the head.'

"We know that."

"'And a little Sister came that way—
Ay! ay! ay! ay!'"

continued Marcel.

"If you do not hold your tongue, I shall begin to play the allegro from my symphony on 'The Influence of Blue in the Arts,'" said Schaunard, who already felt symptoms of mental derangement; and he made for the piano.

The threat produced the effect of a little cold water poured into a boiling pot; Marcel calmed down as though by enchantment.

"There!" he said, handing over the letter. "Look!"

It was an invitation to dine with a deputy, an enlightened patron of the arts, and of Marcel in particular, who had painted a picture of his country house.

"If it is for to-day, it is unlucky that the card will not admit two persons," remarked Schaunard; "but now I come to think of it, your deputy is Ministerialist. You cannot, you ought not, to accept; for your principles forbid your eating bread soaked in the sweat of the people's brows."

"Pooh!" said Marcel, "my deputy is Centre Left; he voted against the Government the other day. Besides, he ought to put me in the way of a commission, and he promised to give me some introductions. What is more, you see, I am as ravenous as Ugolino. Friday or no, I mean to dine to-day, so there it is!"

"There are other things in the way," Schaunard went on, being, in fact, a trifle jealous of his friend's windfall. "You cannot possibly go out to dine in a short red jacket and a bargeman's cap."

"I am going to Colline's or Rodolphe's to borrow some clothes."

"Insensate youth! Have you forgotten that we have passed the twentieth day of the month? By this time any articles of apparel belonging to those gentlemen will have been spouted over and over again."

"I shall find a black coat, anyhow, by five o'clock," said Marcel.

"It took me three weeks to find one to wear at my cousin's wedding, and that was in the beginning of January."

"Very well, I shall go as I am," retorted Marcel, striding up and down. "It shall not be said that paltry considerations of etiquette prevented me from making my first step into society."

"By the way, how about boots?" put in Schaunard, who seemed greatly to enjoy his friend's chagrin.

Marcel went out in a state of agitation impossible to describe.

In two hours' time he came back with a linen collar.

"It was all I could find," he said mournfully.

"It was not worth while to run about for so little. There is paper enough here to make a dozen."

Marcel tore his hair. "Hang it all, but we must have some things here!" he cried.

A strict search, pursued for the space of an hour through every corner of both rooms, yielded a costume thus composed:—

A pair of plaid trousers.

A grey hat.

A red cravat.

One glove, which had once been white.

One black glove.

"They will make a pair at a pinch," suggested Schaunard. "By the time you are dressed you will look like the solar spectrum. But what is that, when one is a colourist?"

Marcel meanwhile was trying on the boots. By some unlucky chance both belonged to the same foot!

Then, in his despair, Marcel bethought himself of an old boot lying in a corner—a receptacle for spent bladders of paint. On this he seized.

"From *Garrick* to *Syllabus*," was his friend's ironical comment; "one is pointed at the toes, and the other square."

"No one will see it; I am going to varnish them."

"What a notion! Now you only want a regulation dress-coat."

"Oh, look here!" groaned Marcel, biting his hand, "I would give ten years of my life and my right hand for one!"

There was another knock at the door. Marcel went to open it.

"M. Schaunard?" said a stranger, pausing on the threshold.

"I am he," said the painter, and begged him to enter.

"Monsieur," began the stranger, whose honest countenance marked him out as a typical provincial, "my cousin has been talking a good deal of your talent as a portrait painter, and as I am just about to start on a voyage to the colonies as delegate of the sugar refiners of Nantes, I should like to leave a souvenir with my family. So I have come to look you up."

"Oh, sacred Providence!" muttered Schaunard. "Marcel, hand a chair to Monsieur ——"

"M. Blancheron," the stranger continued. "Blancheron of Nantes, delegate of the sugar industry, formerly Mayor of V——, Captain in the National Guard, and author of a pamphlet on the sugar question."

"I feel greatly honoured by being chosen by you," said the artist, bowing before the refiners' delegate. "How do you wish to have your portrait painted?"

"In miniature, like that," rejoined M. Blancheron, pointing to an oil portrait (for to the worthy delegate, as to a good many other people, there are but two

kinds of paintings—house and miniature; there is no middle term).

This artless reply gave Schaunard the measure of the good soul with whom he had to do, especially when M. Blancheron added that he wished to have his portrait done in fine colours.

"I never use any other kind," said Schaunard. "How large do you desire to have your portrait, monsieur?"

"As big as that one," said M. Blancheron, pointing to a canvas in the studio. "But what price does that come to?"

"Fifty to sixty francs; sixty with hands included, fifty without."

"The devil! my cousin talked about thirty francs."

"It varies with the season," rejoined the painter, "colours are much dearer at some times than at others."

"Why, then, it is like sugar!"

"Exactly."

"Let it be fifty francs, then," said M. Blancheron.

"You are making a mistake. For another ten francs the hands could be put in; and I should paint you holding your pamphlet on the sugar question, which would be very gratifying to you."

"Upon my word, you are right."

"By Jove!" said Schaunard to himself, "if he keeps on at this, I shall burst; and somebody may be hurt with the pieces."

"Did you notice?" Marcel continued to whisper.

"What?"

"He has a black coat."

"I comprehend, and I enter into your ideas. Leave it to me."

"Well, monsieur," said the delegate, "when shall we begin? We must not leave it too long, for I start almost directly."

"I am going on a short journey myself; I am leaving Paris the day after to-morrow. So we can begin at once, if you like. A great deal can be done in one good sitting."

"But it will be dark directly, and you cannot paint by artificial light," said M. Blancheron.

"My studio is so arranged that you can work in it at any time. If you like to take off your coat and sit, we can begin now."

"Take off my coat? Why?"

"Did you not tell me that you wanted a portrait to give to your family?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, you ought to be painted in the dress you wear at home—in your dressing-gown. Besides, it is usual to do so."

"But I have not my dressing-gown with me."

"I keep one on purpose," said Schaunard, presenting to his model's gaze a ragged object bespattered with paint. At sight of it the provincial appeared to hesitate.

"It is a strange-looking garment," he began.

"And very valuable," rejoined the painter. "A Turkish vizier presented it to M. Horace Vernet, by whom it was given to me. I am a pupil of his."

"Are you one of Vernet's pupils?" asked Blancheron.

"I am, monsieur, I am proud to say. (Horrors!"

he muttered to himself, "I am denying my gods.")

"And well you may be, young man," returned the delegate, enveloping himself in a dressing-gown of such distinguished antecedents.

"Hang M. Blancheron's coat up," said Schaunard, with a significant wink to his friend.

Marcel flew upon his prey. "I say," he murmured, "this is something very good. Could you not keep a bit for me?"

"I will try, but let that be; dress quickly, and be off. Come back at ten o'clock, I will keep him here till then. And on no account forget to bring me something back in your pockets."

"I will bring you a pineapple," said Marcel as he went.

The coat was hastily slipped on (it fitted him like a glove), and he departed by another door.

Schaunard meanwhile got to work. As it grew quite dark and the clocks struck six, M. Blancheron recollected that he had not dined. He made an observation to this effect.

"I am in the same case," said Schaunard, "but to oblige you I will dispense with dinner this evening, though I have an invitation to a house in the Faubourg Saint Germain. We cannot be disturbed now, it might spoil the likeness," and he set to work again.

"By-the-by," he added suddenly, "we can dine without putting ourselves about. There is a very good restaurant below; they will send us up anything we like"; and Schaunard watched the effect of this trio of "we's."

"I am quite of your opinion," said M. Blancheron, "and on the other hand, I shall be glad to think that you will do me the honour of keeping me company at table."

Schaunard bowed.

"Come!" he said to himself, "this is a good man, a real messenger of Providence. Will you give the order?" he asked his host.

"You will oblige me by undertaking it yourself," the other returned politely.

"*Tu t'en repentiras Nicolas,*" sang the painter as he skipped downstairs four steps at a time.

Entering the restaurant, he betook himself to the counter, where he drew up such a menu that the Vatel of the establishment read it with blanched cheeks.

"Bordeaux, as usual."

"Who is going to pay me?"

"Not I, probably," said Schaunard, "but mine uncle, an epicure; you will see him upstairs. So try to distinguish yourself, and let us have dinner served up in half an hour; and on porcelain, that is most important."

* * * * *

At eight o'clock that night M. Blancheron had already begun to feel the need of some friendly bosom on which to pour out all his ideas on the sugar industry, and recited his pamphlet aloud to a pianoforte accompaniment by Schaunard.

At ten o'clock M. Blancheron and his friend danced a galop together, and thee and thoued each other freely. At eleven they swore never to part,

and each made a will leaving the whole of his fortune to the other.

At midnight Marcel came in and found them weeping in each other's arms and the studio half an inch deep in water already. Stumbling against the table, he discovered the remains of a splendid banquet, and looking at the bottles saw that they were all perfectly empty.

Then he tried to wake Schaunard, but that worthy, with his head pillowed on M. Blancheron, threatened to kill him if he took his friend away from him.

"Ingrate!" was Marcel's comment, as he drew a handful of hazel nuts from his coat pocket, "and I was bringing him home something for dinner!"

III

LENTEN LOVES

ONE evening in Lent Rodolphe went home early intending to work. But scarcely had he sat down and dipped his pen in the ink when he was disturbed by an unusual sound. Applying his ear to the indiscreet partition wall, he could hear and distinguish perfectly well an onomatopoetic dialogue carried on principally in kisses in the next room.

"Confound it!" thought Rodolphe as he glanced at the clock. "It is early yet, and my fair neighbour is a Juliet who seldom permits her Romeo to depart with the lark. It is impossible to work to-night." So taking up his hat he sallied forth.

As he stepped into the porter's lodge to hang up his key, he found the portress half imprisoned by the arm of a gallant. The poor woman was so overcome that it was fully five minutes before she could pull the door-string.

"It is a fact," mused Rodolphe, "there are moments when portresses become mere women."

He opened the street door, and lo! in the corner, a fireman and a cook-maid were exchanging a preliminary token of affection, standing there holding each other by the hand.

"Egad!" cried he, as he thought of the warrior

and his stalwart companion, "here be heretics, who scarcely so much as know that Lent has begun." And he made for the lodging of a friend in the neighbourhood.

"If Marcel is at home, we will spend the evening in abusing Colline," said he to himself. "One must do something, after all."

After a vigorous rapping, the door at length stood ajar, and a young man simply dressed in little but a shirt and a pair of eye-glasses put his head out.

"I cannot ask you to come in," said this person.

"Why not?" demanded Rodolphe.

"There!" said Marcel, as a feminine head appeared from behind a curtain, "that is my answer."

"And not a handsome one," was Rodolphe's retort after the door had been shut in his face. "So," said he to himself when he turned into the street, "what next? Suppose I go to Colline's? We could put in the time abusing Marcel."

But as Rodolphe traversed the Rue de l'Ouest, a dark street and little frequented at any time, he perceived a shadowy figure prowling about in a melancholy manner, muttering rimes between its teeth.

"Hey day!" said Rodolphe, "who is this Sonnet, dancing attendance here? Why, Colline!"

"Why, Rodolphe! Where are you going?"

"To your rooms."

"You will not find me there."

"What are you doing here?"

"Waiting."

"And for what?"

"Ha!" cried Colline, breaking into mock-heroics.

"For what does one wait, when one is twenty years old, and there are stars in heaven and songs in the air?"

"Speak in prose."

"I am waiting for a lady."

"Good night," returned Rodolphe, and he made off, talking to himself. "Bless me! is it St. Cupid's Day, and can I scarcely take a step without jostling a pair of lovers? This is scandalous and immoral! What can the police be doing?"

As the Luxembourg Gardens were still open, Rodolphe took the short cut across them. All along the quieter alleys he saw mysterious couples with their arms about each other flit before him, as if scared away by the sound of his footsteps, to seek, in the language of the poet, the double sweetness of silence and shade.

"It is an evening out of a novel," said Rodolphe; but the languorous charm grew upon him in spite of himself, and sitting down on a bench, he looked sentimentally up at the moon.

After a time he felt as if some feverish dream had taken possession of him. It seemed to him that the marble population of gods and heroes were coming down from their pedestals to pay their court to their neighbours the goddesses and heroines of the gardens; indeed, he distinctly heard the big Hercules singing a madrigal to Velleda, and thought that the Druidess's tunic looked unusually short. From his seat on the bench he watched the swan in the fountain glide across towards a nymph on the bank.

"Good!" thought Rodolphe, prepared to believe

in the whole heathen mythology. "There goes Jupiter to a tryst with Leda! If only the police do not interfere!"

Resting his forehead on his hands, he deliberately pushed further into the briar-rose wood of sentimentality. But at the finest point in his dream Rodolphe was suddenly awakened by a tap on the shoulder from a policeman.

"Time to go out, sir," said the man.

"A good thing too," thought Rodolphe. "If I had stayed here for another five minutes I should have had more *vergiss-mein-nicht* in my heart than ever grew on the banks of the Rhine, or even in Alphonse Karr's novels." And he made all haste out of the Luxembourg Gardens, humming in his deep bass voice a sentimental tune which he regarded as the lover's "Marseillaise."

Half an hour after, in some unexplained way, he found himself at the "Prado," sitting at a table with a glass of punch before him, and chatting with a tall young fellow, famous for his nose—a feature which possessed the singular quality of looking aquiline in profile and like a snub nose when seen full face; a nose of noses—not without sense, with a sufficient experience of love affairs to be able to give sound counsel in such cases and to do a friend a good turn.

"So you are in love?" Alexandre Schaunard (the owner of the nose) was saying.

"Yes, my dear boy. It came on quite suddenly just now, like a bad toothache in your heart."

"Pass the tobacco," said Alexandre.

"Imagine it!" continued Rodolphe. "I have

met nothing but lovers for the past two hours—men and women by twos and twos. I took it into my head to go into the Luxembourg, and there I saw all sorts of phantasmagoria, which stirred my heart in an extraordinary way, and set me composing elegies. I bleat and I coo—I am being metamorphosed; I am half lamb, half pigeon. Just look at me; I must be covered with wool and feathers!"

"What can you have been drinking?" Alexandre put in impatiently. "You are hoaxing me, that is what it is."

"I am quite cool and composed, I assure you," said Rodolphe. "That is, I am not; but I am going to inform you that I long for a mate. Man should not live alone, you see, Alexandre; in a word, you must help me to find a wife. . . . We will take a turn round the dancing saloon, and you must go to the first girl that I point out to you, and tell her that I am in love with her."

"Why don't you go and tell her so yourself?" returned Alexandre in his splendid nasal bass.

"Eh, my dear boy! I assure you I have quite forgotten how these things are done. Friends have always written the opening chapters of all my love stories for me; sometimes they have even done the conclusions too. But I never could begin myself!"

"If you know how to end, it will do," said Alexandre; "but I know what you mean. I have seen a girl with a taste for the oboe; you might perhaps suit her."

"Oh," answered Rodolphe, "I should like her to wear white gloves, and she should have blue eyes."

"Oh, confound it! Blue eyes? I don't say no; but gloves! You cannot have everything at once, you know. Still, let us go to the aristocratic quarters."

"There!" said Rodolphe, as they entered the room frequented by the more fashionable portion of the assemblage—"there is someone who seems a very pleasant girl." He pointed out a rather fashionably dressed damsel in a corner.

"Good!" returned Alexandre. "Keep a little bit in the background; I will go hurl the firebrand of passion for you. When the time comes I will call you."

Alexandre talked with the girl for about ten minutes. Every now and again she burst into a merry peal of laughter, and ended by flinging Rodolphe a glance which meant plainly enough, "Come, your advocate has gained your cause."

"Go, the victory is ours!" said Alexandre. "The little creature is not hardhearted, there is no doubt about it; but you had better look harmless and simple to begin with."

"I stand in no need of that recommendation."

"Then pass me a little tobacco," said Alexandre, "and go and sit over there with her."

"Oh, dear, how funny your friend is!" began the damsel, when Rodolphe seated himself beside her. "He talks like a hunting horn."

"That is because he is a musician," answered Rodolphe.

Two hours later Rodolphe and his fair companion stopped before a house in the Rue Saint Denis.

"I live here," she said.

"Well, dear Louise, when shall I see you again, and where?"

"At your own house, to-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"Really?"

"Here is my promise," said Louise, offering two fresh young cheeks, the ripe fruit of youth and health, of which Rodolphe took his fill at leisure. Then he went home intoxicated to madness.

"Ah!" he cried as he strode to and fro in his room, "it must not pass off thus; I positively must write some poetry."

Next morning his porter found some thirty pieces of paper lying about the room, with the following solitary line majestically inscribed at the head of each (otherwise blank) sheet—

"O Love! O Love! thou prince of youth!"

That morning Rodolphe, contrary to his usual habit, had awaked very early, and though he had slept very little, he got up at once.

"Ah, broad daylight already!" he cried. "Why, twelve hours to wait! What shall I do to fill those twelve eternities?"

Just then his eyes fell on his desk. The pen seemed to fidget, as if to say, "Work!"

"Work, ah yes! A plague take prose! . . . I will not stay here, the place stinks of ink."

He installed himself in a café where he was quite sure of meeting none of his friends. "They would see that I am in love," he told himself, "and shape my ideal in advance for me." So after a succinct

repast Rodolphe hastened to the railway station, took the train, and in half an hour was out in the woods of Ville d'Avray. There set at freedom in a world grown young with spring, he spent the whole day in walking about, and only came back to Paris at nightfall.

First of all Rodolphe put the temple in order for the reception of the idol; then he dressed himself for the occasion, regretting as he did so that a white costume was out of the question.

From seven o'clock till eight he suffered from a sharp, feverish attack of suspense. The slow torture recalled old days to his mind, and the ancient loves which lent them charm. And, faithful to his habit, he fell a-dreaming of a heroic passion, a ten-volume love, a perfect lyrical poem, with moonlit nights and sunsets and meetings under the willow tree and sighs and jealousy and all the rest of it. It was always the same with him whenever chance threw a woman in his way; nor did the fair one ever quit him without an aureole about her head and a necklet of tears.

"They would much prefer a hat or a pair of shoes," remonstrated his friends, but Rodolphe was obdurate, nor hitherto had his tolerably numerous blunders cured him. He was always on the look-out for a woman who should consent to pose as his idol; an angel in velvet to whom he might indite sonnets on willow leaves at his leisure.

At last the "hallowed hour" struck, and as Rodolphe heard the last stroke sound with a sonorous clang of bell metal, it seemed to him that he saw the alabaster Cupid and Psyche above his

timepiece arise and fall into each other's arms. And at that very moment somebody gave a couple of timid taps on his door.

Rodolphe went to open it, and there stood Louise.

"I have kept my word, you see," she said.

Rodolphe drew the curtains and lighted a new wax candle; and the girl meanwhile took off her hat and shawl and laid them on the bed. The dazzling whiteness of the sheets drew a smile and something like a blush.

Louise was charming rather than pretty, with a piquant mixture of simplicity and mischief in her face, somehow suggesting one of Greuze's themes treated by Gavarni. All her winning girlish charm was still further heightened by a toilette which, simple though it was, showed that she understood the science of coquetry, a science innate in every woman, from her first long clothes to her wedding-dress. Louise appeared, besides, to have made a special study of the theory of attitudes; for as Rodolphe looked at her more closely with an artist's eye, she tried for his benefit a great variety of graceful poses, the charm of her movements being for the most part of the studied order. The slenderness of her daintily shod feet, however, left nothing to be desired—not even by a Romantic with a fancy for the miniature proportions of the Andalusians or Chinese; as for her hands, it was plain from their delicate texture that they did no work, and indeed for the past six months they had had nothing to fear from needle pricks. To tell the whole truth, Louise was one of the birds of passage whom fancy, or oftener still necessity, leads to make their nest for a

day, or rather for a night, in some garret in the Latin Quarter, where they will sometimes stay for several days, held willing captives by a riband or a whim.

After an hour's chat with Louise, Rodolphe pointed by way of example to the Cupid and Psyche.

"Is that Paul and Virginia?" asked she.

"Yes," said Rodolphe, unwilling to vex her by a contradiction at the outset.

"It is very like," returned Louise.

"Alas!" sighed Rodolphe as he looked at her, "the poor child has not very much literature. I feel sure that she only knows the orthography of the heart, which knows no 's' in the plural. I must buy her a grammar."

While he thus meditated, Louise complained that her shoes hurt her, and he obligingly was helping her to unlace them, when all on a sudden the light went out.

"There!" exclaimed Rodolphe, "who can have blown out the candle?"

A joyous burst of laughter answered him.

Some days later Rodolphe met a friend who accosted him in the street.

"Why, what are you doing? You have dropped out of sight."

"Making poetry out of my own experience," returned Rodolphe, and the unfortunate young man told the truth.

He had asked more of Louise than the poor child could give him. Your little hurdy-gurdy cannot

give out the notes of the lyre, and Louise used to talk, as one may say, the *patois* of love, while Rodolphe insisted that she should use poetical language. So they understood each other somewhat imperfectly.

A week later, at the very dancing saloon where she met Rodolphe, Louise came across a fair-haired young fellow, who danced a good many dances with her and ended by taking her home.

He was a second-year student; he spoke the prose language of pleasure very well; he had fine eyes, and pockets that jingled musically.

Louise asked him for paper and ink, and wrote Rodolphe a letter thus conceived:—

"Dont count on mee any more. One larst kiss and goodbye.—LOUISE."

As Rodolphe read this epistle that night, when he came in, the light suddenly went out.

"There!" he said to himself meditatively, "that is the very candle which I lighted when Louise came that evening; it is fitting that it should burn out now that all is over between us. If I had only known, I would have chosen a longer one," he added, with a ring in his voice, half vexation, half regret, and he laid Louise's note in a drawer, which he was wont at times to call the catacombs of his dead love affairs.

One day when Rodolphe was with Marcel he picked up a scrap of paper off the floor to light his pipe, and recognised Louise's handwriting and spelling.

"I possess an autograph of the same writer," he remarked to his friend, "only in mine there are two fewer mistakes in spelling. Does that not show that she loved me better?"

"It proves that you are a fool," returned Marcel; "white arms and shoulders have no need of grammar."

IV

ALI RODOLPHE

OR, THE INVOLUNTARY TURK

OSTRACISED by a churlish landlord, Rodolphe led for a time a nomad life, doing his best to perfect himself in the arts of sleeping supperless, and supping without a bed to follow, with Chance for his chef, and the ground open to the stars for his lodging. No cloud wandered more than he.

Still amid these painful cross events two things did not desert him—to wit, his good humour and the manuscript of *The Avenger*, a tragedy which had made the rounds of all the likely openings for dramatic talent in Paris.

But one day, as it befell, Rodolphe, having been conducted to the "jug" for a choregraphic performance a trifle too weird for public taste, found himself face to face with an uncle, a genuine uncle whom he had not seen for an age, in the shape of one Monetti, a stove manufacturer, an authority on chimneys, and a sergeant in the National Guard to boot.

Touched by his nephew's misfortunes, Uncle Monetti promised to mend matters; how, we shall presently see, if the ascent of six pairs of stairs does not dismay the reader.

The Latin Quarter

So let us grasp the handrail and climb . . . . Ouf! one hundred and twenty-five steps! Here we are. One step more takes us into the room, another would bring us out at the other side. The place is perhaps small, but it is high up, and besides there is good air up there and a fine view.

The furniture consists of a good selection of chimney cowls, a couple of portable stoves, a few patent grates for economising fuel (especially if no fuel is put in them), a dozen or so of funnels and fire-bricks, and a whole host of warming apparatus; furthermore, to complete the inventory, add to these a hammock slung from a couple of hooks in the walls, a garden chair with an amputated leg, a chandelier still adorned with a solitary socket, and various fancy articles and objects of art.

As for the second room, a balcony and a couple of dwarf cypresses in pots convert it into a park for the summer.

The tenant of this abode, a young man dressed like a Turk of comic opera, is just finishing his breakfast as we enter, a meal which in itself is a shameless violation of the law of the Prophet, as may be sufficiently seen by the presence of the mortal remains of a knuckle of ham and what was once a full bottle of wine.

Breakfast ended, the youthful Turk extended himself on the floor in Oriental fashion, languidly smoking a narghilé marked "J.G.," and while he gave himself up to a sense of Asiatic beatitude, he passed his hand from time to time over the back of a magnificent Newfoundland dog, who would no

doubt have responded to these caresses if he had not been made of earthenware.

All at once a sound of footsteps came from the passage, and the door opened to give admittance to somebody who without a word went straight up to a range which did duty as a bureau, drew a roll of papers out of the oven, and subjected them to a close scrutiny.

"What!" cried the new-comer, speaking with a strong Piedmontese accent, "have you not finished the chapter on 'Ventilation Holes' yet?"

"With your leave, uncle," replied the Turk, "the chapter on 'Ventilation Holes' is one of the most interesting in your work, and requires to be studied with especial care. I am now studying it."

"Wretched boy, it is always the same thing! And my chapter on 'Hot-air Stoves,' how is that going on?"

"The hot-air stove is doing well. By-the-by, uncle, if you would let me have a little firewood it would not come amiss. It is a small edition of Siberia up here; I am so cold that I have only to look at the thermometer, and it drops below zero!"

"What! have you burned a whole faggot already?"

"With your permission, uncle, there are faggots and faggots, and yours was a very little one."

"I will send you a block of patent fuel; it keeps the heat in."

"That is precisely why it gives none out."

"Oh, well, I will send you up a little faggot," returned M. Monetti as he withdrew. "But I want my chapter on 'Hot-air Stoves' to-morrow."

"When the fire comes it will inspire me," called the Turk, as the key was turned a second time in the lock.

If this history were a tragedy, now would be the time to bring in the confidant. His name would be Noureddin or Osman; he would approach our hero with a mixture of discretion and protection in fine and just proportion, and worm his secret out of him with some such lines as these:—

"What boding grief, my lord, o'erwhelms you now?
And why this pallor on your awful brow?
Did Allah's might my lord's designs arrest?
Did Ali execute his stern behest
And bear to exile under alien skies
The wilful fair whose beauty charmed his eyes?"

But this is not a tragedy, and in spite of our pressing need of a confidant we must do without him.

Our hero is not what he appears to be. The turban does not make the Turk, and the youth is no other than our friend Rodolphe, received into the abode of his uncle, for whom he is in the act of shaping a manual, the *Complete Guide to Chimneys.* The fact is that M. Monetti, an enthusiast for his art, had devoted his life to the science of chimney construction, and had even adapted for his own use a maxim which serves in some sort as a pendant to that of Cicero: "The stovemaker is born, not made" —*nascuntur poê . . . liers*, the worthy Piedmontese would cry in moments of lofty enthusiasm. One day it occurred to him to formulate, for the benefit of future races of man, a theoretical code

of the principles of an art in the practice of which he excelled. His ideas requiring, however, to be put in a setting which should make them generally intelligible, he had, as we have seen, chosen his nephew for the task. Rodolphe was boarded, lodged, and so forth, and on completion of the *Guide* was to receive a premium of a hundred crowns.

At the outset, and to encourage his nephew to work, Monetti had generously made him an advance of fifty francs. Rodolphe, who had not set eyes on such a sum for nearly a year, was in a fair way to go out of his mind; he issued forth in the company of the coins, for three days nothing was seen of him, and the fourth he returned—alone.

Monetti, having hopes of a red ribbon, was in a hurry to see his manual completed. He put his nephew under lock and key for fear of fresh escapades, and the better to keep him to work took away his clothes, and left instead the disguise in which we have just discovered him.

But in spite of all this, the famous *Guide* went on at a jog-trot pace. Rodolphe's genius was absolutely unsuited to literature of that kind. Monetti avenged himself for his nephew's slothful indifference in the matter of chimneys by making him suffer all sorts of hardships, sometimes cutting down his meals, and frequently cutting off tobacco.

At length, one Sunday, when Rodolphe had toiled at the chapter on "Air Holes" till his brows were covered with the ink and sweat of anguish, he broke the pen, which made his fingers itch, and went to take a walk in his park.

But (as if it had been arranged on purpose to tantalise him and exasperate his cravings) he could not so much as glance in any direction without perceiving the countenance of a man with a pipe at every window.

On the gilded balcony of a newly built house he remarked a dandy, in a dressing-gown, chewing the end of an aristocratic Havana. On the floor above sat an artist wafting abroad a fragrant mist of Lévantine from a pipe with an amber mouthpiece. Below, at the window of a public-house, a fat German was blowing the froth from a pot of beer in the intervals of puffing like a steam-engine at a Cudmer pipe, from which dense clouds arose; and in another direction a knot of working-men, their cutty pipes between their teeth, were walking along, singing on their way, to the barrier. Every man in the street, in fact—and there were a good many—was smoking.

"Alack!" Rodolphe exclaimed enviously, "at this hour there is not a creature in the world but smokes save I and my uncle's chimneys." And leaning his brow on the handrail, Rodolphe meditated upon the bitterness of life.

Just then the sound of a prolonged peal of musical laughter came up to him from below. He bent over a little to see whence this burst of merriment proceeded, and perceived that he had been seen by a lodger who occupied the floor immediately beneath—one Mlle. Sidonie, a leading lady at the Luxembourg Theatre.

Mlle. Sidonie came out upon her terrace rolling between her fingers with Castilian dexterity a tiny

roll of light tobacco which she took from an embroidered velvet pouch.

"What a handsome tobacco pouch!" Rodolphe muttered to himself in thoughtful adoration.

"Who is that Ali Baba?" Mlle. Sidonie wondered, and in her mind she meditated pretexts for beginning a conversation with Rodolphe, who in fact was engaged in a similar mental process.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Mlle. Sidonie, as if speaking to herself, "how tiresome, I have no matches!"

"Will you allow me to offer you some, mademoiselle?" said Rodolphe, and wrapping two or three matches in a scrap of paper, he let them drop on the balcony.

"A thousand thanks!" said Sidonie as she lit her cigarette.

"Oh, heavens, mademoiselle," Rodolphe continued, "may I venture to ask, in return for the slight service which my good angel enabled me to render——"

("What! he is asking something already!" thought Sidonie, honouring Rodolphe with a closer attention. "Ah, these Turks! They are fickle, people say, but very pleasant.") Then, raising her face to Rodolphe's, she said aloud, "Speak, monsieur, what do you want?"

"Oh, heavens, mademoiselle, I will only beseech a little tobacco of your charity; I have not had a smoke for two days. Only one pipe——"

"With pleasure, monsieur. But how is it to be done? Will you be so good as to come downstairs?"

"Alas! that is quite out of the question. I am a prisoner, but I will make use of such freedom as I have to avail myself of a very simple device," and fastening a string to his pipe, he let it down to the terrace, where Mlle. Sidonie abundantly filled it. Then, with deliberate caution, Rodolphe drew it up again without accident.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said, "how much improved my pipe would have been if I could have lighted it at your eyes!"—an agreeable pleasantry which has reached its hundredth edition at least, but Mlle. Sidonie thought it none the less superb.

"You flatter me," she thought it incumbent upon her to reply.

"Oh, mademoiselle, to me you seem lovely as the Three Graces."

"Decidedly," thought Sidonie, "Ali Baba is very polite.—Are you really a Turk?" she inquired.

"Not by vocation, but of necessity. I am a dramatic author, madame."

"And I am an actress," returned Sidonie, adding, "Will you do me the honour of dining and spending the evening with me, monsieur?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, your proposal opens up all heaven to me, but it is impossible to accept it. I am a prisoner, as I have already had the honour of telling you; locked in by my uncle, Monetti, a stove manufacturer, to whom for the present I am acting as secretary."

"Still you can dine with me," returned Sidonie. "Pay attention to what I am going to tell you. I am about to go back into my room, and I will knock on the ceiling. If you will look closely at

the spot from which the sound comes, you will find traces of a square hole there, long since closed up. If you can contrive to pull up the board laid across it, we can keep each other company, each in our separate room."

Rodolphe set to work at once, and in five minutes' time had opened up communication between the two chambers.

"The hole is small," said he, "yet not so small but that my heart can pass through it."

"Now we will dine," returned Sidonie. "Lay the cloth in your room, and I will hand up the dishes."

Rodolphe let down his turban by a piece of string and drew it up again laden with provisions; then the poet and actress sat down to dinner, the one above, the other below; and while Rodolphe's teeth were busy with the food, his eyes devoured Mlle. Sidonie.

"Alas, mademoiselle!" he remarked, when the meal was over. "Thanks to you, the cravings of hunger are satisfied. Will you not do as much for the cravings of my heart, after so prolonged a fast?"

"Poor boy!" said Sidonie. And mounting on a piece of furniture, she brought her hand to Rodolphe's lips. He covered it with kisses.

"Ah!" he cried, "what a pity that you have not, like Saint Denis, the privilege of carrying your head in your hands!"

After dinner a conversation, half sentimental, half literary, sprang up. Rodolphe talked of his *Avenger,* and Mlle. Sidonie asked him to read it

aloud. So Rodolphe, hanging over the hole in the ceiling, declaimed his tragedy for the benefit of the actress below, who the better to hear him had seated herself in an armchair on the top of a chest of drawers. Mlle. Sidonie pronounced *The Avenger* to be a masterpiece, and as she was apt to have her own way at the theatre, she promised Rodolphe that his play should appear.

Uncle Monetti's footstep, light as the tramp of the Commandant, broke in upon their discourse at the very tenderest moment. Rodolphe had only just time to put the board back in its place.

"Stay!" said Monetti, addressing his nephew, "here is a letter for you. It has been running about after you this month past."

"Let us look at it," said Rodolphe. "Oh, uncle!" he cried, "I am rich! The letter informs me that I have been awarded a prize of three hundred francs by an Academy of Floral Games. Quick! my coat and my things, and let me hie to reap my laurels! They await me at the Capitol."

"And how about my chapter on 'Air Holes'?" his uncle retorted coolly.

"Eh? Much that matters! Give me back my things. I am not going tricked out like this——"

"You are not going out at all until the *Guide* is finished," said his uncle, as he locked in Rodolphe with a double turn of the key.

Left alone, Rodolphe was not long about making up his mind. Tying the bedclothes together, he made one end fast to his balcony-railing; and by means of the improvised ladder arrived safely, in spite of the perils of the descent, upon Mlle. Sidonie's terrace.

"Who is there?" she cried when Rodolphe tapped on the window-panes.

"Hush!" said he, "let me in——"

"What do you want? Who are you?"

"Can you ask? I am the author of *The Avenger*, and I have come down to look for my heart, for I let it fall through the hole in your ceiling."

"Wretched young man," said the actress, "you might have killed yourself."

"Listen to me, Sidonie," Rodolphe went on, showing her the newly received letter. "Fame and Fortune are smiling upon me, you see . . . if only Love will do the same?"

* * * * *

Next morning Rodolphe contrived to make his escape from his uncle's house by the aid of a masculine disguise which Sidonie found for him; and hurrying away to the representative of the Academy of Floral Games, received a Golden Eglantine of the value of a hundred crowns, a blossom which lived almost as long as roses usually do.

A month afterwards M. Monetti received an invitation from his nephew to the first performance of *The Avenger*. Thanks to Mlle. Sidonie's talent, it was performed seventeen times and brought in forty francs to its author.

Later still, as it was summer-time, Rodolphe took up his abode in the Avenue de Saint Cloud—on the fifth branch of the third tree to the left as you come from the Bois de Boulogne.

V

CHARLEMAGNE'S CROWN-PIECE

TOWARDS the end of the month of December the messengers of Bidault's agency received for distribution about a hundred copies of a circular of which we certify the following to be a true and genuine copy :—

To M.

MM. Rodolphe and Marcel request the honour of your company at a Soirée, on Christmas Eve (Saturday next). There is going to be some fun.

P.S. We only live once!!

PROGRAMME.

7 P.M. The salons will be open : lively and animated conversation.

8 P.M. The ingenious authors of *The Mountain in Labour* (a comedy refused by the Odéon) will take a turn round the rooms.

8.30 P.M. M. Alexandre Schaunard, the distinguished artist, will execute his *symphonie imitative* for the piano, called *The Influence of Blue in Art.*

9 P.M. First reading of a Memoir on the abolition of the penalty of Tragedy.

9.30 P.M. M. Gustave Colline, hyperphysical philosopher, and M. Schaunard will commence a debate on comparative philosophy and metapolitics. In order to prevent any possible collision, the two disputants will be tied together.

10 P.M. M. Tristan, a literary man, will relate the story of his first love. M. Alexandre Schaunard will play a pianoforte accompaniment.

10.30 P.M. Second reading of the Memoir on the abolition of the penalty of Tragedy.

11 P.M. The Story of a Cassowary Hunt, by a foreign Prince.

II.

At midnight M. Marcel (historical painter) will make a white chalk drawing, with his eyes bandaged. Subject: The interview between Napoleon and Voltaire in the Champs Elysées. At the same time M. Rodolphe will improvise a parallel between the author of *Zaïre* and the author of *The Battle of Austerlitz*.

12.30 A.M. M. Gustave Colline, in modest undress, will give a revival of the Athletic Sports of the Fourth Olympiad.

1 A.M. Third reading of the Memoir on the abolition of the penalty of Tragedy, followed by a collection in aid of authors of tragedies, who are likely to be thrown out of employment.

2 A.M. Sports and quadrilles which will be kept up till morning.

6 A.M. Rise of the sun upon the scenes, and final chorus.

The ventilators will be open during the whole of the Soirée.

N.B.—Any person attempting to read or recite poetry will be immediately ejected from the rooms and taken into custody; you are similarly requested not to carry away candle-ends.

In two days' time copies of this epistle were circulated freely in the lowest circles of literary and artistic unsuccess, where they made a profound sensation.

Nevertheless, among the invited guests there were found some to cast a doubt upon the splendours announced by the friends.

"I have good suspicions," remarked one of the sceptics. "I used to go now and again to Rodolphe's Wednesdays, in the Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, you could only sit down figuratively, and the drink was water, imperfectly filtered, in eclectic pottery."

"It is something really serious this time," said another. "Marcel showed me their plans for the evening, and it seems there will be magical effects."

"Are there to be ladies?"

"Yes, Phémie Teinturière asked to be queen of the revels, and Schaunard is sure to ask other ladies as well."

There in a few words is the origin of the festivity which produced such bewildered amazement in transpontine Bohemia. For a year past, or thereabouts, Marcel and Rodolphe had announced this sumptuous gala; it was always coming off "next Saturday," but painful circumstances compelled the promise to make a progress through the fifty-two weeks; and things had came to such a pass that the friends could not take a step abroad without encountering some ironical remark from the rest of their acquaintances, some of whom were indelicate enough to give them vigorous reminders of their engagements. The matter beginning to wear the aspect of a hoax, Rodolphe and Marcel resolved to put a stop to all this by fulfilling their pledges. And so the above invitation was sent out.

"There is no drawing back now," was Rodolphe's comment; "we have burnt our boats. We cannot do things properly on less than a hundred francs; there is only a week left, and we shall have to find the money."

"If we must have it, we shall find it," Marcel had replied. And with an insolent confidence in Chance this pair of friends slept, convinced in their own minds that their hundred francs were on the way —for impossible things have a way of turning up.

Still, when Thursday came, and nothing had yet turned up, Rodolphe thought that giving Chance a help would perhaps be a surer way if he did not mean to be left in the lurch when the time came for lighting up the chandeliers. To facilitate this, they gradually cut down the more sumptuous items of expenditure in the programme which they had drawn up.

After proceeding from one modification to another, after erasing perforce the item Cakes, and carefully revising and diminishing the item Refreshments, the total expense was reduced to fifteen francs. The accounts were simplified, but not, so far, settled.

"Come, come," said Rodolphe, "we must try drastic measures now. We may take it first of all for granted that we cannot put it off this time."

"Impossible!" returned Marcel.

"How long is it since I last heard the history of the battle of Studzianka?"

"Nearly two months."

"Two months, good; a decent interval, my uncle cannot complain. I will go to hear about the battle of Studzianka to-morrow—that will mean five francs, for certain."

"And I will go and sell a 'Ruined Manor-house' to old Medicis. That will be another five francs. If I have time to put in two or three turrets and a mill, it may perhaps fetch ten francs, and we shall have all we want."

And with that the friends slept and dreamed that the Princess Belgiojoso begged them to change their

"At Home" days because they interfered with her receptions.

Marcel awoke very early, took a piece of canvas and threw his energies into the construction of a "Ruined Manor-house," a subject much fancied by a dealer in the Place du Carrousel; while Rodolphe betook himself to Uncle Monetti. The veteran stove manufacturer excelled in the narration of the Retreat from Moscow, and Rodolphe was wont when hard up to drop in five or six times a year to give the old man the satisfaction of telling the story of his campaigns, expecting a loan of money in return, for his relative was not over hard to persuade when his audience knew how to show sufficient enthusiasm.

It was nearly two o'clock. Marcel, crossing the Place du Carrousel, with head down bent and a canvas under his arm, came upon Rodolphe, who had just left his uncle. There was that in his bearing which boded no good.

"Well," said Marcel, "did you succeed?"

"No; my uncle has gone to the Musée at Versailles. Did you?"

"That brute of a Medicis doesn't want any more ruined castles; he asked me for a 'Bombardment of Tangier.'"

"Our characters are hopelessly lost if we do not give our fête," murmured Rodolphe. "What would our friend the influential critic think if I made him put on a white tie and a pair of primrose-coloured gloves for nothing?" And the pair returned to the studio in acute throes of anxiety.

A neighbouring clock struck four at that very moment.

"We have only three hours left us," said Rodolphe.

Marcel came up to his friend—

"But are you quite sure, really sure, that we have no money here, eh?" he cried.

"Neither here nor anywhere else. Where should any overplus come from?"

"Suppose we hunt under the furniture—in the armchairs. They say that *émigrés* used to hide treasure in armchairs in Robespierre's time. Who knows? Perhaps our armchair once belonged to an *émigré;* at any rate, it is so hard that I have often thought there must be metal inside it. Will you have an autopsy?"

"This is pure farce," retorted Rodolphe in a tone of severity blended with indulgence.

Marcel, still prosecuting his search in every corner of the studio, all at once gave a great shout of triumph.

"Saved!" he cried; "I *knew* we had valuables of some sort here. Here! Look!" and he held up for Rodolphe's inspection a big coin, as large as a crown-piece, half eaten away by wear and verdigris.

It was a Carolin coin of some artistic merit. By good luck the lettering had been preserved, and the date, of the time of Charlemagne, was still legible.

"That!" said Rodolphe, glancing with disdainful eye at his friend's treasure-trove, "it is worth thirty sous."

"Thirty sous well laid out will produce a great deal of effect," retorted Marcel. "With twelve hundred men Bonaparte compelled ten thousand Austrians to surrender. Skill equals numbers. I am off to change Charlemagne's crown-piece at old Medicis'. Is there nothing else that we can sell? Stop a bit, though, suppose I take the cast of Jaconowski's *tibia?*—that Russian drum-major's shin bone would make up bulk."

"Take the *tibia*. But it is annoying; there will not be a single work of art left here."

Whilst Marcel was away Rodolphe, who had quite decided to give the soirée, whatever happened, went to find his friend Colline, the hyperphysical philosopher who lived close by.

"I have come," he said, "to beg you to do me a service. As host, I absolutely must have a black coat, and—and I haven't one. — Lend me yours."

Colline hesitated. "But," he demurred, "as a guest, I want my black coat myself."

"I will overlook it if you come in an overcoat."

"I have never had an overcoat, as you well know."

"Very well, listen; there is another way of managing it. If needs must, you might stop away and lend your black coat to me."

"That is annoying. I am down on the programme; so I should be missed, and that would not do."

"Plenty of other things will be missing too," said Rodolphe. "Lend me your black coat, and if you mean to come, come as you please—in shirt-

sleeves, if you like—you would pass for a faithful domestic."

"Oh, no!" said Colline, flushing up. "I shall wear my nut-brown paletot. But, indeed, all this is very annoying." Perceiving as he spoke that Rodolphe had already taken possession of the famous black coat, he cried—

"Why, wait a bit . . . There are a few little things in it."

Colline's dress coat deserves some mention. To begin with, the garment was of an uncompromising blue colour, though from force of habit Colline spoke of it as his black coat. And as he was the only one of the band who owned a dress coat at all, his friends likewise had fallen into the way of speaking of the philosopher's official garb as "Colline's black coat." What is more, this famous article of dress was of a peculiar cut, as queer a shape as can be seen; the very long skirts attached to a very short waist contained a pair of pockets—regular gulfs in which Colline was wont to stow some score of volumes which he always carried about upon him; so that his friends used to say that when the libraries were closed, the learned might consult the works of reference in Colline's coat pockets, a library always open to readers.

This time, by some extraordinary chance, Colline's pocket merely contained a quarto volume of Bayle, a treatise in three volumes on the hyperphysical faculties, a tome of Condillac, a couple of volumes by Swedenborg and Pope's *Essay on Man*. When Colline had cleared out his pocket collection, he allowed Rodolphe to put on the coat.

"Stay," said the other, "the left-hand pocket is still very heavy; you have left something in it."

"Ah, true," returned Colline, "I forgot to clear out the foreign language pocket." And so saying he drew out a couple of Arabic grammars, a Malay dictionary and a copy of the *Complete Ox-driver* in Chinese, his favourite reading.

When Rodolphe came in again he found Marcel playing at quoits with five-franc pieces to the number of three, and his first impulse was to refuse the hand which his friend proffered—he was convinced that a crime had been committed.

"Make haste, make haste!" said Marcel. "Here are the fifteen francs we wanted. This is how it happened: I met an antiquary at Medicis'. At the sight of the coin he was almost taken ill; it was the one thing he wanted to complete his collection. He has been sending all over the world, and had lost all hope of filling up the gap. So when he had taken a good look at my crown-piece he offered me five francs for it straight off. Medicis jogged my elbow, and a look said the rest. He meant, 'Let us go halves in the profits, and I will send up the price.' So between us we ran it up to thirty francs; I let the Jew have fifteen, and here is the rest. Now, let our guests come; we are ready to dazzle them. Why, you have a black dress coat!"

"Yes," said Rodolphe, "it is Colline's coat." And as he groped for his handkerchief, a small volume of Manchu tumbled out of the foreign language pocket.

The two friends set to work at once on their preparations, putting the studio in order and lighting a

fire in the stove. A painter's canvas-stretcher, with a row of candles stuck round it, was hung from the ceiling as a chandelier; a bureau was dragged into the middle of the studio to serve as a rostrum for orators; the only armchair, which was to be occupied by the influential critic, was placed in front of it, and the table was covered with poems, plays, novels and articles written by authors who were to honour the soirée with their presence. In order to prevent any possible collision between men of letters of different camps, the studio had been divided into four quarters, each labelled with a scrawled placard, thus—

POETS' CORNER.	ROMANTICS.
PROSE WRITERS.	CLASSICISTS.

A space was reserved for the ladies in the middle.

"Look here! we are short of chairs," said Rodolphe.

"Oh, there are a lot out on the landing, in a row along the wall," said Marcel. "Suppose we take them in?"

"Certainly we ought," said Rodolphe, seizing on the chairs, which belonged to one of the neighbours.

As the clock struck six the friends went out for a hasty dinner, and then came back to light up. They were dazzled themselves by the result. At seven o'clock Schaunard arrived with three ladies, who had left their diamonds and their hats at home. One of them wore a red shawl with black spots on it. Schaunard particularly called Rodolphe's attention to this person.

"She comes of a very good family," he explained.

"She is an Englishwoman. The fall of the Stuarts compelled her to take refuge in exile, and now she lives very quietly by giving English lessons. I understand from her that her father was Lord Chancellor under Cromwell. She must be treated politely; do not be too free-and-easy with her."

The sound of many footsteps came up from the staircase. The guests were arriving, and saw, to their astonishment, that a fire was burning in the stove.

Rodolphe's black dress coat was well to the fore. He kissed the hands of the ladies as they entered with all the grace of the bygone days of the Regency. When a score or so of visitors had arrived Schaunard asked whether refreshments were not going to be handed round.

"Yes, in a moment," said Marcel; "we are awaiting the arrival of the influential critic before warming the punch."

At eight o'clock the room was full, and the programme was proceeded with. Refreshments of some kind (what they were nobody ever knew precisely) were handed round during every interval. It was nearly ten o'clock before the white waistcoat of the influential critic appeared upon the scene, but he only stayed an hour, and was very moderate in his potations.

At midnight, as all the firewood was burnt up, and the temperature was very low, those of the guests who had chairs drew lots as to who should convert his seat into fuel.

At one o'clock everybody was standing.

The evening passed off without regrettable inci-

dents of any kind, unless we except a rent made in the foreign language pocket of Colline's coat, and a box on the ear administered by Schaunard to the daughter of Cromwell's Chancellor.

This memorable soirée was the talk of the Quarter for a week afterwards, and Phémie Teinturière, the queen of the evening, used to say, when she told her friends about it, "It was tremendously grand; such a lighting up of candles we had, my dear!"

VI

MADEMOISELLE MUSETTE

MADEMOISELLE MUSETTE was a pretty girl of twenty, who, shortly after her arrival in Paris, began to live as pretty girls are apt to live when their equipment consists of a slender waist, a good deal of coquetry, a little ambition and no grammar to speak of. For some time Musette was the delight of Latin Quarter suppers, for if she did not always sing in tune, her voice was quite fresh, and she knew a number of country glees and songs, an accomplishment which gained for her the name under which she has since been made famous by the lapidaries of rime. Then, quite suddenly, Musette deserted the Rue de la Harpe for the upper realms of Cytherea, in the Quartier Bréda.

There she very soon became one of the first ornaments of the aristocracy of pleasure, and was in a fair way to reach the sort of celebrity which consists in seeing one's name in the Paris papers, and one's lithographed portrait in the printsellers' shops.

Mlle. Musette, nevertheless, was an exception among the women who lead such lives as hers. Like all truly womanly women, she had an instinctive feeling for refinement and poetry, loving

luxury and all the enjoyments which luxury procures. In her coquetry there was an ardent longing for all that is fine and rare; and though a daughter of the people, she would have felt by no means out of her element amid royal splendours. But Mlle. Musette, young and beautiful as she was, had never brought herself to consent to be the mistress of a man who was not likewise handsome and young. She had been known to refuse with spirit the splendid offers made by an old and wealthy man (so wealthy, indeed, that people called him the Perú of the Chaussée d'Antin), though this person had reared a golden staircase for Musette's fancies to climb. But Musette was clever and quick-witted, nor did she suffer fools gladly, whatever their age, title, or condition.

She was a fine spirited girl was this Musette, whose motto in love affairs was Champfort's famous aphorism, "L'amour est l'échange de deux fantaisies." And so, never at any time before forming a connection had she made any of the shameful bargains which are the disgrace of modern gallantry. Musette, as she said herself, played fair and expected others to do the same by her. But though she was ardent and spontaneous in her likings, they never lasted long enough to rise to the height of a passion. And the excessive instability of her fancy, together with the small attention that she gave to the purses of those who paid court to her, brought great instability into her own life. It was a constant succession of ups and downs, always oscillating between a fifth floor and an *entresol*, between an omnibus and a smart

brougham, silk gowns and cotton frocks. Ah, charming girl, living poem of youth, with your gay songs and ringing laughter; ah, soft heart, that beat for all the world beneath that loosened bodice! Oh, Mlle. Musette, sister of Bernerette and Mimi Pinson, only an Alfred de Musset could do justice to your careless, vagabond course in the flowery byways of youth; and he truly would have made you famous also, had he heard you as I heard you singing your favourite round in that sweet voice of yours that never could keep quite in tune—

"The softest of days of the Spring
And I whispered my love in her ear—
Ah dark little face
Like Cupid's dear mate,
Ah daintiest lace
Of butterfly weight."

The story which we are about to relate is one of the most charming episodes in the life of the charming adventuress who flung so many caps over so many windmills.

Once upon a time, when Mlle. Musette ruled a young Councillor of State who had politely placed the key of his patrimony in her hands, it was her wont to give weekly soirées in her pretty little salon in the Rue de la Bruyère. The soirées were much like any others in Paris, with this difference—people were amused. When there were not seats enough people sat on each other's knees; and it not unfrequently happened that two persons drank out of the same glass. As Rodolphe was Musette's friend, and never more than her friend (neither of them could ever tell why), he asked leave to bring

Marcel the painter, a young fellow with some talent, he added, for whom the Future was weaving an academician's robe.

"Bring him," answered Musette.

On the appointed evening Rodolphe accordingly climbed Marcel's stairs in search of his friend, and found him engaged on his toilet.

"What!" exclaimed Rodolphe, "are you going to wear a coloured shirt as evening dress?"

"And is that any offence against established usage?" Marcel inquired calmly.

"Offence? Yes, of the deepest dye, miscreant!"

"The devil!" cried Marcel, looking at his shirt, a blue one covered with vignettes representing hunting scenes, "the fact is I have no other here. Pooh! so much the worse for me. I will put on a white collar, and as 'Methuselah' buttons up to the throat, no one will notice the colour of my linen."

"Why, are you going to wear 'Methuselah' as well?" Rodolphe asked uneasily.

"Alas! I must. It is the will of heaven and of my tailor likewise. But at any rate, his buttons have just been renewed, and I have gone over him here and there with lamp-black."

"Methuselah" was simply Marcel's frock coat, so called because it was the oldest inhabitant of his wardrobe. Methuselah was made in the extreme of the fashion of four years ago, and, what was more, of a hideous green colour, though Marcel declared that it looked black by candle-light.

In another five minutes Marcel was dressed, dressed with the utmost perfection of bad taste—a *rapin* in evening dress.

M. Casimir Bonjour's amazement when he heard that he was elected a member of the Institute could not surpass the astonishment of Marcel and Rodolphe when they arrived at Mlle. Musette's house. This was the cause. Mlle. Musette had some time ago broken off relations with her lover the Councillor of State, and he had left her at a very critical juncture. Her creditors and her landlord had seized her furniture, which was now in the courtyard waiting to be carried off to the auction-room in the morning. But in spite of this incident, the idea of giving her visitors the slip never crossed Musette's mind for a moment, nor did she cancel her engagements for that evening. Instead, she solemnly arranged the courtyard as a drawing-room, put down a carpet over the stones, made all her preparations as usual, dressed for the evening, and invited all the other lodgers in the house to her little fête, to which heaven kindly contributed its illuminations.

The farce proved an immense success. Never had the fun been kept up with such spirit and gaiety. Musette's guests were still dancing and singing when the brokers' men came to take away tables, couches and carpet, and the company was forced to break up.

Musette saw them all depart, singing—

"'Twill be long ere they forget—la, ri, ra,
Oh! my Thursday evening;
They'll be talking of it yet—la, ri, ri."

At last Marcel and Rodolphe were left alone with Musette; she went up to her flat where there was nothing left but the bedstead.

"Ah, well," she remarked, "my adventure does

not look quite such good fun now. I must betake myself to lodgings in the open. I know that hotel pretty well, it is a tremendous place for draughts."

"Ah, madame," said Marcel, "if I had the gifts of Plutus I would build you a temple finer than Solomon's, but——"

"But you are not Plutus, my friend. I am obliged to you all the same for your intentions. Pshaw!" she added, glancing round the rooms, "I was getting bored here; and then, the furniture was old-fashioned. Why, I have had it these six months! Still, that is not all; after the ball comes the supper, I suppose."

"A supper-sition," said Marcel, who had a mania for making puns, especially of a morning when he was terrible.

Rodolphe had won at *lansquenet* the night before, so he took Musette and Marcel to a restaurant which had just opened.

After breakfast, as none of the party had the slightest inclination for sleep, they decided to finish their day in the country; and since the railway station was quite near, they took the first train for Saint Germain.

All day long they wandered through the woods, only returning to Paris at seven in the evening, and then it was in spite of Marcel, who persisted that it was still only half-past twelve, and that if it looked dark it was because the sky was overcast.

The fact was, that Marcel had been smitten with Mlle. Musette's charms; he had a heart like a barrel of powder, a single glance set it alight; as he told Rodolphe, he had paid his addresses to her

in no slight fashion. He had even offered to buy the fair lady a handsomer suite of furniture with the proceeds of his famous picture, "The Crossing of the Red Sea," for which reason he beheld with dismay the approach of the moment when they must part; for though Musette allowed him to kiss her fingers and other accessories, she allowed matters to go no further, and gently repulsed him every time that he tried to make a burglarious entry into her heart.

Arrived at Paris, Rodolphe left them, and Musette asked Marcel to escort her to her door.

"May I be allowed to come and see you?" asked Marcel; "I am going to paint your portrait."

"I cannot give you my address, my dear fellow, for by to-morrow I probably shall not have one. But I will come to see you; I am going to mend your coat. There is a hole in it so big that anybody could move out through it without paying the landlord."

"I shall look for your coming as for the Messiah!" exclaimed Marcel.

"You will not have so long to wait," laughed Musette.

"What a charming girl!" said Marcel to himself, as he strolled away. "She is the goddess of gaiety. I shall make two holes in my coat."

He had not gone thirty paces before someone tapped him on the shoulder. It was Mlle. Musette.

"My dear M. Marcel," she began, "are you a chivalrous Frenchman?"

"I am; 'Rubens and my Lady' is my motto."

"Well then, give ear, noble sir, and have com-

passion upon my strait," went on Musette, who had some tincture of letters, though she murdered grammar in a way that recalled the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. "My landlord has carried off the key of my room, and it is eleven o'clock at night—do you understand?"

"I do," returned Marcel, offering his arm, and he brought her to his studio on the Quai aux Fleurs.

Musette was so sleepy that she could scarcely stand, but she had enough energy left to say, as she shook Marcel's hand—

"Remember your promise."

"Oh, Musette, charming girl," returned he, with a quiver in his voice, "you are beneath a hospitable roof. Sleep in peace. Good night, I am going out."

"Why?" asked Musette, with half-open eyes. "I am not in the least afraid, I assure you. Besides, there are two rooms here; I will sleep on your sofa."

"My sofa is too hard to be slept upon; it is stuffed with flock made of flints. I offer you hospitality in my house, and will throw myself upon that of a friend who lives on the same landing; it is more prudent. I usually keep my word, but I am twenty-two years old, and you, oh, Musette, are eighteen! So I am going; good night!"

Next morning, at eight o'clock, Marcel, with a pot of flowers which he had bought in the market, found that Musette had flung herself down, dressed as she was, on the bed, and was still lying there fast asleep. Some sounds that Marcel made awoke her. She held out her hand.

"Good fellow!" she said.

"Good fellow!" repeated Marcel. "Are you sure that is not the same as saying that I am ridiculous?"

"Oh, why do you say that? It is not nice of you. Just give me that lovely jar of flowers instead of saying unkind things."

"Indeed, I brought them up here for you," said Marcel. "Pray take them, and sing me one of your charming songs in return for my hospitality; the echo here in my garret may perhaps keep something of your voice, and I shall hear you still after you are gone."

"Ah! so you mean to put me out at the door," returned Musette; "and how if I do not mean to go? Listen, Marcel; having come up thirty-six steps, I may say what I think. I like you, and you like me. It is not love, but the seed of love, perhaps. Well, I am not going; I shall stay, and I shall stay here till the flowers that you have just given me are withered."

"Oh, but they will be withered in two days!" cried Marcel. "If I had known I would have brought you everlasting flowers!"

* * * * *

For a fortnight Musette and Marcel led the most delightful life imaginable, though they were often without a penny. Musette's tender feeling for the artist was something quite unlike anything that she had known before, and Marcel on his side began to fear that he was taking this love affair too seriously. He did not know that his mistress was very much afraid of falling in love with him. Every morning, as he looked at the flowers which were to give the

signal for parting, he was sorely puzzled to account for their daily renewed freshness ; but he soon found a clue to the mystery. One night he awoke, and missed Musette at his side. He rose, hurried across the room, and found her watering the flowers. Every night while he was asleep she tended them, for fear they should die.

VII

FLOODS OF PACTOLUS

'TWAS the nineteenth of March. . . . Rodolphe will never forget that date, though he should live to the age of M. Raoul-Rochette, who beheld the foundation of Nineveh, for it was on that day (the day of St. Joseph), at three o'clock in the afternoon, that our friend came out of a bank where he had just drawn the sum of five hundred francs in hard cash—current coin of the realm.

The first use that Rodolphe made of this slice of Peru which had just dropped into his pocket was not to pay his debts by any means, though at the same time he had registered a vow to go in for economy, and to buy nothing extra. Indeed, he had extremely decided views on this subject, being wont to say that necessities ought to come before superfluities, and that was why, leaving his creditors unpaid, he bought instead a long-coveted Turkish pipe.

Thus provided, Rodolphe set out for the abode of his friend Marcel, with whom he had lodged for some time, and walked into the studio, his pockets jingling like a peal of village bells for some high holiday. Marcel, hearing the unwonted sounds, thought that a neighbour, a "bear" on the Stock

Exchange, must be reckoning up his profits, and muttered—

"Here is that intriguer near by, at his epigrams again! If this sort of thing keeps on I shall give notice. One cannot work with such a racket in the house. It makes you think of quitting the estate of a poor artist to turn into that of the forty thieves." And without the faintest suspicion that his friend Rodolphe had been transformed into a Crœsus, he set to work again on his picture, "The Crossing of the Red Sea," which had been on the easel some three years.

Rodolphe meanwhile had not said a word; in his own mind he was ruminating on an experiment which he meant to try on his friend. "We will have some fine fun directly," he said to himself. "What a joke! Bless me!" and he dropped a five-franc piece on the floor.

Marcel looked up and saw Rodolphe looking as serious as an article in the *Revue des deux Mondes.* The artist picked up the coin with an air of great satisfaction, for *rapin* as he was, he was something of a man of the world, and could be very polite to strangers. He knew besides that Rodolphe had gone out for money, and seeing that his friend had succeeded, confined himself to admiring results without inquiring into the means by which they had been obtained.

So he worked away without a word, and drowned an Egyptian in the billows of the Red Sea. The homicide was just accomplished when Rodolphe let fall another five-franc piece, and watching the face that the artist made, laughed in his beard (a tricolor

beard, as everybody knows). For at the ringing sound of metal Marcel sprang up as if electrified, crying—

"What! Is there a second verse?"

A third coin rolled along the floor, and another, and again another, till at last a whole quadrille of five-franc pieces was dancing in the room.

Marcel was beginning to show visible symptoms of mental derangement, while his friend laughed like the pit of the Théâtre Français at the first night performance of *Jeanne de Flandre*, when all at once without any warning Rodolphe dived into his pockets with both hands, and the crown-pieces began a fabulous steeplechase. It was like Pactolus in flood, or the appearance of Jove before Danae.

Marcel stood staring fixedly, motionless and mute. Astonishment had wrought in him a change similar to that brought about in Lot's wife of yore, when she fell a victim to curiosity; so when Rodolphe flung his last pile of a hundred francs on the floor, one side of the painter's body was turned to salt already.

As for Rodolphe, he was still laughing with a tempestuous hilarity, compared with which the thunders of M. Sax's orchestra would seem but the sigh of a suckling.

Dazzled, throttled and dazed with emotion, Marcel thought he must be dreaming; he tried to drive away the nightmare and bit his fingers till they bled, whereby he hurt himself so horribly that he was like to cry aloud for pain, and so, perceiving that he was broad awake and that a quantity of gold lay under his feet, he exclaimed like a character in a tragedy—

"Am I to believe my eyes?"

Then taking Rodolphe's hand in his, he added, "Give me the explanation of this mystery."

"If I did, it would not be a mystery any longer."

"Still, tell me."

"This gold is the fruit of the sweat of my brow," explained Rodolphe as he picked it up and arranged it on a table. Then, drawing back a few paces, he looked respectfully at the piles of francs, thinking within himself—

"So now am I going to realise my dreams!"

"It cannot be far off six thousand francs," murmured Marcel, staring at the coins on the table. "I have an idea. I will adjure Rodolphe to buy my 'Crossing of the Red Sea.'"

But all at once Rodolphe assumed a theatrical pose, and, with great solemnity of gesture and voice, said—

"Hear me, Marcel; the fortune which glitters beneath your eyes is in no wise the result of vile manœuvres; I have not trafficked in my pen; I am rich, but honest. That gold was given me by a generous hand; I have sworn to utilise it in acquiring by work a position worthy of an honest man. Work is the most sacred of duties——"

"And the horse is the noblest of animals," interrupted Marcel. "Look here!" he went on, "what may this oration mean, and where did you get that prose? You have been taking a course at the school of common sense, no doubt."

"Do not interrupt; a truce to your raillery! It will fall blunted, besides, on the cuirass of an invulnerable will, in which henceforth I am empanoplied."

"Come, come, that is enough of such a prologue. What are you driving at?"

"These are my projects: Sheltered from the material embarrassments of life, I shall set to work seriously; I am going to finish my fairy piece, and to achieve a settled position in public esteem. In the first place, I am renouncing Bohemia; I am going to dress like everybody else; I mean to have a black frock coat and to go into society. If you like to take my way, we can go on living together, but my programme is to be adopted. The strictest economy shall be the rule of our lives. If we manage wisely, we have three months of steady work assured to us, with no need to think of anything else. But economy is necessary."

"My friend," said Marcel, "economy is a science which only the wealthy can afford to study; whence it follows that you and I are ignorant of its first elements. Still, by making an outlay of six francs we can purchase the works of M. Jean-Baptiste Say, a very distinguished economist, and from him perhaps we may learn the best manner of practising that art. . . . I say! Have you a Turkish pipe?"

"Yes," said Rodolphe; "I gave twenty-five francs for it."

"What! twenty-five francs for a pipe, and you are talking of economy?"

"This is certainly one," returned Rodolphe. "I used to break a penny pipe every day of my life; at the year's end the expense amounted to a good deal more than twenty-five francs. So it really is an economy."

"So it is," said Marcel; "you are right. I should never have thought of that."

A neighbouring clock struck six at that moment.

"Let us be quick and dine," said Rodolphe. "I want to begin this very night. But *à propos* of dinner I have an observation to make. We waste valuable time every day by doing our own cooking; now for the worker time is money; so we cannot afford to waste time. From this day hence we will go out for our meals."

"Yes," assented Marcel, "there is an excellent restaurant only a few steps away; it is a little expensive, but as it is near we shall not have so far to walk; the economy of time will make up for any extra expense."

"We will go there to-day," said Rodolphe, "but to-morrow and for the future we will hit upon a still more economical plan. Instead of going out to a restaurant we will engage a cook——"

"No, no," Marcel put in, "we had better engage a man-servant who will also cook for us. Just see the immense advantage of such a plan. To begin with, the housework would always be done for us; the man will black our boots and wash out my brushes and do our errands; I would even try to inculcate some taste for the fine arts and take him as a student. In this way we should save at least six hours a day spent upon occupations which only spoil our work."

"Ha!" cried Rodolphe, "*I* have an idea, too—but let us go and dine."

Five minutes later the friends were installed in a private room in the aforesaid restaurant, continuing their discourse on economy.

"Here is my idea! How, if instead of engaging a servant, we were to take a mistress?" hazarded Rodolphe.

"One mistress for two!" Marcel cried in dismay. "It would be pushing avarice to the verge of extravagance; we should squander all our savings in buying knives with which to cut each other's throats! I am for the man-servant. In the first place, he would give us importance.

"So he would; we will procure an intelligent young fellow, and if he has some notion of spelling I will teach him the editor's craft."

"That will be a resource for his old age," said Marcel as he added up the bill, which amounted to fifteen francs. "I say, that is rather dear! As a rule we both of us dine for thirty sous."

"Yes," said Rodolphe, "but we dined badly, and were obliged to take supper afterwards. So looked at all round this is an economy."

"You are the cleverer, as one may say," the artist remarked under his breath, completely subjugated by this argument, "you are always right. Are we going to work this evening?"

"Faith, no. I am going to see my uncle, he is a good man; I am going to tell him about my new position, and he will give me some good advice. And how about you, where are you going, Marcel?"

"I? I am going to old Medicis to see if he has pictures for me to restore. By-the-by, let me have five francs."

"For what?"

"To cross the Pont des Arts."

"Oh, but that is a needless expense, and trifling as it is it is a deviation from our principle."

"I was wrong—it is a fact," said Marcel. "I will go by the Pont Neuf—but I shall take a cab."

And the friends separated, each going a different way; though by a strange coincidence both ways led straight to the same spot, where they met.

"Why! then you have not found your uncle at home?" asked Marcel.

"And Medicis was out?" retorted Rodolphe.

And they both burst out laughing.

Still they both reached home at a very early hour —of the morning.

Another two days found Marcel and Rodolphe completely metamorphosed. Both dressed like bridegrooms for a first-class wedding; looking so handsome, elegant and sleek that they hardly knew each other in the street.

Their system of economy was nevertheless in full swing, but the organisation of the work had been very difficult to carry out. A man-servant of Swiss origin had been engaged. He was a tall fellow of four-and-thirty, with an intelligence about on a par with that of Jocrisse. What was more, he had no vocation for domestic service. If either of his masters entrusted Baptiste with a parcel of a size visible to the naked eye, he would redden with indignation and send a commissionaire on the errand. Still, Baptiste had his good points. He could turn out a dish of jugged hare, for instance, if supplied with the materials; and as he had been a distiller before taking service, and retained a great love of his art, he spent a good deal of his

masters' time in experimenting on the composition of a new and superior specific for wounds and bruises, to which he intended to give his name. He also excelled in the compounding of walnut cordial. But in one respect Baptiste was unrivalled, and this was the art of smoking Marcel's cigars and lighting them with Rodolphe's manuscript.

At length one day Marcel proposed that Baptiste should sit to him in costume as Pharaoh for his "Crossing of the Red Sea." This suggestion Baptiste met by a point-blank refusal and a request for his wages.

"Good," said Marcel, "you shall be paid to-night."

When Rodolphe came in, his friend declared that Baptiste must be sent away. "He is of no use whatsoever," said Rodolphe.

"True," assented Marcel, "he is a living object of art."

"He is as stupid as any goose that ever was roasted."

"He is idle."

"He must go."

"Let us dismiss him."

"Still, he has his good points, after all. His jugged hare is very good."

"And his walnut cordial, too. He is the Rafael of walnut cordial."

"Yes; but that is all he is fit for, and that will hardly do for us. We waste our whole days in arguing with him."

"He is a hindrance to work."

"I have not been able to finish my 'Crossing of

the Red Sea' for the Salon, and it is his fault; he would not sit for Pharaoh."

"Thanks to him, I have not been able to finish the piecework I was asked to do. He would not go to the library to look up some notes that I wanted."

"He is ruining us."

"We really cannot keep him on."

"Let us dismiss him. But if we do we ought to pay him off."

"We are going to pay him, but go he must. Give me the money, and I can settle the accounts."

"What money? But you are cashier, not I."

"Not at all; you are treasurer. You undertook the general management," said Rodolphe.

"But I have no money, I assure you!" exclaimed Marcel.

"Is it possible that there is none left already? No; impossible! No one can spend five hundred francs in one week, especially living, as we have done, with the most rigid economy, limiting ourselves to the strictly necessary." ("To the strictly superfluous," he ought to have said.) "We must go through the accounts," added Rodolphe, "and we shall find out the mistake."

"Yes," agreed Marcel, "but we shall not find the money. It is all one; let us look at the books."

Behold a specimen of the sort of book-keeping begun in the sacred name of economy—

"'19th March. Received: 500 frs. Spent: A Turkish pipe, 25 frs.; dinner, 15 frs.; sundries, 40 frs.'"

"What may those sundries be?" interrupted Rodolphe, as Marcel read out the item.

"You know quite well; it was the night when we only got home in the morning. There was a clear saving of coal and candle light, at any rate."

"And next? Go on."

"'20th March. Lunch, 1 fr. 50 c.; tobacco, 20 c.; dinner, 2 frs.; an eye-glass, 2 frs. 50 c.'—Oh!" exclaimed Marcel, interrupting himself, "that eye-glass goes down to your account. What did you want with an eye-glass? You can see perfectly——"

"I had to write a notice of the Salon for the *Iris*, as you know; it is impossible to do art criticism without an eye-glass. It was a legitimate expense. What next?"

"'A Malacca cane——'"

"Cane now! that goes to your account," put in Rodolphe, "you do not need a cane."

"That is all that we spent on the 20th," said Marcel, taking no notice of this remark. "On the 21st we went out to lunch, and to dine and to sup."

"We ought not to have spent very much that day."

"Very little, as a fact—barely thirty francs."

"But on what?"

"I can't recollect now; but it goes down under 'Sundries.'"

"A vague and misleading heading," observed Rodolphe.

"'22nd March.' That was the day Baptiste came. We let him have five francs on account of wages; 'a Barbary organ,* 50 c.; to save the lives of four little Chinese children condemned to be flung into the

* A barrel organ.

Yellow River by the incredible barbarity of their parents, 2 frs. 40 c.'"

"Oh, come now!" cried Rodolphe, "just explain the glaring contradictions contained in those words. If you subsidise the Barbary organ, why sneer at the barbarous parents? And besides, why was it necessary to preserve some orange-skinned Chinese infants? If they had been China oranges, you might have preserved them—in brandy."

"'Tis my nature to be generous," returned Marcel. "Here, go on; so far we have kept pretty close to the principle of economy."

"On the 23rd there is nothing particular; the same may be said of the 24th. On the 25th, 'gave Baptiste on account, 3 frs.'"

"He has been given money very often, it seems to me," said Marcel by way of a reflection.

"There will be all the less to pay him," returned Rodolphe. "Go on."

"'26th March. Sundries and necessities for art, 36 frs. 40 c.'"

"Why, what can we have bought that was so useful?" queried Rodolphe; "I remember nothing myself. '36 frs. 40 c.'! What can it be?"

"How is it you don't remember? That was the day when we went up the towers of Notre Dame to see the bird's-eye view of Paris."

"But it only costs eight sous to go up the towers!"

"Yes; but when we came down again we went to Saint Germain to dine."

"Your wording is lucid to a fault."

"And on the 27th there is nothing particular."

"Good! There is economy for you!"

"On the 28th. 'To Baptiste, on account of wages, 6 frs.'"

"Aha! I am quite sure this time that we owe Baptiste nothing; it might even turn out that he is in our debt. That must be looked into."

"On the 29th. Dear me, there is nothing down for the 29th, and instead there is the beginning of an article on morals!"

"Then the 30th. Ah! we had some friends to dine with us. A heavy expense—30 frs. 55 c. The 31st, that is to-day. We have not spent anything yet. You see," said Marcel in conclusion, "that the accounts have been accurately kept. The total does not amount to five hundred francs."

"In that case, then, there must be some cash in hand."

"We can see," said Marcel, opening a drawer. "No, there is nothing left; there is only a spider!"

"A spider in the morning is as good as a warning," said Rodolphe.

"Where the deuce could so much money go?" began Marcel, aghast at the sight of the empty cash-box.

"Why, hang it all, it is quite plain!" retorted Rodolphe. "Baptiste has had it!"

"Stay, though," cried Marcel, catching sight of a scrap of paper in the drawer. "Here is a demand for last quarter's rent!"

"Pshaw!" said Rodolphe. "How did it get there?"

"And receipted too!" added Marcel. "So you have been paying the landlord!"

"I? Oh, come now!"

"Then what does this mean?"

"But I assure you——"

"Pray, what means this mystery?"

They sang in chorus from the finale of the *Dame Blanche;* and Baptiste, being fond of music, came hurrying in at once.

Marcel held up the receipt.

"Oh yes," Baptiste remarked carelessly, "I forgot to tell you that the landlord came in this morning, while you were out. I paid him to save him the trouble of coming again."

"Where did you find the money?"

"Oh, I took it, sir! The drawer was open. It even occurred to me that you left it open on purpose, and I said to myself, 'My masters forgot to say when they went out, "Baptiste, the landlord will come for the quarter that is due, and he must be paid."' So I did it as if I had had my orders—without being ordered."

"Baptiste!" said Marcel in a white heat of passion, "you went beyond your orders. From this day you are no longer in our service. Baptiste, give up your livery!"

Baptiste took off the oil-cloth cap which composed his livery, and handed it to Marcel.

"Well and good," said the latter, "now you can go."

"And my wages?"

"What do you say, you rogue? You have had more than your due. You have had fourteen francs in less than a fortnight. What are you doing with so much money? Are you keeping a dancer?"

"On the tight-rope," added Rodolphe.

"And am I to be left homeless, without so much as a shelter for my head?" cried the wretched domestic.

Marcel was touched, in spite of himself. "Take back your livery," he said, handing the cap to Baptiste.

"And yet he is the miserable scoundrel who has squandered our fortune," said Rodolphe, as the hapless Baptiste departed. "Where shall we dine to-day?"

"We shall know that to-morrow," returned Marcel.

VIII

WHAT A CROWN-PIECE COSTS

ONE Saturday evening, in the days before Rodolphe and Mlle. Mimi kept house together (as shall be shown in due time), it so fell out that that gentleman made the acquaintance of one Mlle. Laure, who dined at the same ordinary. Now Mlle. Laure kept a toilet repository, and when she discovered that Rodolphe was editor of two fashion papers, the *Iris* and the *Castor*, plied him with provocative and eloquent glances in the hope of obtaining an advertisement for her wares. To these Rodolphe had replied with a display of poetical fireworks thrown off in a way that would have driven Benserade, Voiture and all the Ruggieris of the "gallant style" wild with envy; and dinner ended, Mlle. Laure perceiving that Rodolphe was a poet, gave him to understand pretty plainly that she was far from averse to accepting him as her Petrarch. She even made a tryst for the morrow without any beating about the bush.

"By Jove," thought Rodolphe, as he escorted Mlle. Laure to her lodging, "she is really an amiable woman; she seems to me to possess some knowledge of grammar, and a fairly well replenished wardrobe. I feel quite disposed to make her happy."

Arrived at Mlle. Laure's door, that lady thanked him for so kindly taking the trouble to come with her to such an out-of-the-way quarter.

"Ah, madame!" returned Rodolphe, bowing to the ground before her, "I could have wished that you dwelt at Moscow or in the Straits Settlements, that my pleasure in acting as your escort might be prolonged."

"It is rather far," simpered Mlle. Laure.

"We should have gone by the Boulevards, madame," said Rodolphe. "Permit me to kiss your hand, in the person of your cheek," he added, kissing his companion on the lips before she could stop him.

"Monsieur!" she exclaimed, "you are going too fast."

"So as to arrive all the sooner," said Rodolphe. "The first stages of love should be taken at a gallop."

"An odd man!" thought the milliner as she went upstairs.

"A pretty woman!" said Rodolphe to himself as he turned away. And back again in his own quarters, he went straight to bed and dreamed the sweetest dreams. He beheld himself parading with Mlle. Laure at balls and theatres and in public places, and the lady on his arm wore dresses more splendid than those of any coquettish princess in a fairy tale.

Next day, at eleven o'clock, Rodolphe rose according to custom, and his first thought was for Mlle. Laure.

"A very pretty woman," muttered he. "I am

sure she was brought up at Saint Denis. So at last I am to know the happiness of having a mistress that is not dowdy-looking. I positively must make some sacrifice for her. I shall draw my pay at the *Iris* office to-day; I will buy a pair of gloves and take Laure to dine at a restaurant where there are table napkins. My coat is not very elegant," he went on as he dressed—"pooh! it is black, though, and that is the great thing." And he set out for the office of the *Iris*.

Just as he crossed the street he met an omnibus, and pasted over one of the panels was a handbill thus conceived: "This day, Sunday, the Great Fountains will play at Versailles."

A thunderbolt dropping at Rodolphe's feet could not have made a more profound impression than the sight of that bill.

"'This day, Sunday'! I had forgotten that it was Sunday, and now I shall not get the money. 'This day, Sunday'! Why, all the five-franc pieces at Paris will be rolling out to Versailles."

Still, urged on by the illusive hopes which spring eternal in the breast of man, Rodolphe hurried to the office in case some blessed chance should have brought the cashier.

M. Boniface, he found, had actually been there, but had gone away again almost immediately. "To go to Versailles," so the office boy told Rodolphe.

"Come," he said to himself, "there is an end of that. But, let us see," he continued, "my appointment is not until evening. It is noon; so I have five hours in which to find five francs—twenty sous

per hour—like the horses in the Bois de Boulogne. So come along."

As he happened to be in the neighbourhood of the journalist whom he styled the influential critic, Rodolphe bethought himself of trying something in that quarter.

"I am sure to find *him* at home," he thought, as he climbed the stairs. "It is his 'special column' day, there is no fear of his going out. I shall borrow five francs of him."

"Eh! what, is that you?" said the literary man at sight of Rodolphe. "Just the man I want; I have a little favour to ask of you."

"Just my case," thought the editor of the *Iris*.

"Were you at the Odéon yesterday?"

"I am always at the Odéon."

"Then you saw the new piece there?"

"Who but I? I am the audience at the Odéon."

"True," returned the critic, "you are one of the caryatids of that theatre. There is even a rumour current that you subsidise that institution. Well, this is what I want to ask—a paragraph about the new play."

"That is easy; I have the memory of a dun."

"Whose is the new piece?" the critic inquired, as Rodolphe wrote.

"It is by a gentleman."

"It is not likely to be a strong play."

"Not as strong as a Turk, assuredly."

"Then it is nothing very powerful. The Turks don't deserve their reputation for strength, you see; they could not be Savoyards."

"And what hinders them?"

"They can't, because all the Savoyards are Auvergnats, and the Auvergnats are street porters. What is more, there are no Turks left, except perhaps at the masked balls at the Barriers and in the Champs Elysées, where they sell dates. The Turk is a superstition. I have a friend who knows the East; he assured me that all nations came originally out of the Rue Coquenard."

"That is a pretty thing to say."

"Think so?" said the critic. "I will put it into my column."

"Here is my analysis; it is an analysis too, and no mistake."

"Yes, but it is short."

"You can fill up with putting in dashes, and developing your critical opinion."

"I have hardly time enough for that, my dear fellow, and then my critical opinion does not take up space enough."

"You can put in an adjective at every third word."

"Could you not slip a little, or rather a long appreciation of the piece into your analysis, eh?"

"Lord!" returned Rodolphe, "I have some ideas of my own on tragedy, but I warn you I have printed them three times in the *Castor* and the *Iris*."

"That is of no consequence; how many lines would your ideas take up?"

"Forty."

"The deuce! You have large ideas of your own! Well, let me have the loan of your forty lines."

"Good," thought Rodolphe. "If I do twenty

francs' worth of copy for him, he cannot refuse to lend me five francs. I ought to warn you," he went on, addressing the critic, "that my ideas are not altogether novel. They are a trifle rubbed at the elbow. Before printing them at all I have yelled them aloud in every café in Paris; there is not a waiter that does not know them by heart."

"Oh! what does that matter to me? Why, you cannot know me! Is there anything new under the sun—except virtue?"

"Here it is," said Rodolphe, as he came to an end.

"Thunder and tempest! Still two columns short. With what can I fill the abyss?" cried the critic. "While you are about it, just oblige me with a few paradoxes."

"I have none about me," said Rodolphe; "still, I can lend you one or two, only they are not my own. I bought them for fifty centimes apiece of a friend who was hard up. They have not been much used yet."

"Very good," said the critic, and Rodolphe set himself to write afresh.

"Ha!" thought he, "I shall certainly ask him for ten francs now; in these times paradoxes are as dear as partridges." And he knocked off a score of lines of remarkable nonsense concerning pianos, red mullet, the common-sense school and Rhine wine which he called Rhine toilet-vinegar.

"Very pretty!" pronounced the critic; "be so much my friend as to add that there are more honest people in the hulks than anywhere else."

"Bless me! why that?"

"To make two more lines. Good, that is done," said the influential critic, and he called to his servant to take the copy to the printer.

"Now let us go for him," thought Rodolphe, and he soberly articulated his request.

"Oh, my dear fellow, I have not a sou here! Lolotte is the ruination of me with her cosmetics. She has just waylaid me, and carried off my last brass farthing to go to Versailles to see the Nereids and brazen monsters spout."

"Versailles! There now!" said Rodolphe, "why it is an epidemic!"

"But what do *you* want money for?"

"Here is the ditty. I have an appointment at five o'clock with a lady, a woman of fashion, who never goes out except in an omnibus. I should like to unite our destinies (for a few days), and it seems only decent to enable her to enjoy something of the sweetness of life—dinners, dances, walks and the like. I absolutely must have five francs. If I cannot find the money French literature is disgraced in my person."

"Why not borrow the sum of the lady herself?" cried the critic.

"That is hardly possible, the very first time. No one but you can get me out of this fix."

"By all the mummies in Egypt, I swear to you on my sacred word of honour, that I have not enough to buy a halfpenny pipe. Still, I have a few books there, which you might melt down into cash."

"To-day, Sunday; impossible! Mother Mansut, Lebigre and all the other skinflints on the quays

and in the Rue Saint Jacques are shut. What are your books? Volumes of poetry, with the portrait of the author in spectacles? There is no sale for that kind of thing."

"Not unless they are sold by order of the Court," said the critic. "Stay a bit, though, there are some novels besides and some concert tickets. If you manage cleverly you might turn them into money."

"I would rather have something else—a pair of trousers, for instance."

"Come, now!" said the critic, "take the Bossuet, and the plaster cast of M. Odilon Barrot; it is the widow's mite, upon my honour."

"You are doing your best, I see," said Rodolphe. "I will carry off these treasures, but if I get thirty sous out of them I shall think of it as a thirteenth labour of Hercules."

By dint of walking some ten miles or so, and exerting a certain faculty of eloquence which Rodolphe knew how to use on great occasions, he succeeded in inducing his laundress to lend him a couple of francs on the security of his consignment of poetry and novels with M. Barrot's portrait.

"Come," said he as he went back across the river, "we have the sauce, now for the dish. Suppose I go to my uncle."

Half an hour later his Uncle Monetti read his nephew's countenance, and knew what was coming. So, being on his guard, he was beforehand with his young relative, and began at once with a series of recriminations, as thus—

Times were bad; bread was dear; outstanding

debts were not paid; rent must be paid; trade was going to the dogs; and so forth, and so forth, through the whole disingenuous tradesmen's litany.

"Would you believe it?—I have had to borrow money of my own shop-boy to meet a bill!"

"You ought to have sent to me," said Rodolphe; "I would have lent you the money. I had two hundred francs paid to me three days ago."

"Thank you, my boy; but you want all you have. . . . Oh! while you are here you might make out some invoices for me, you that write such a good hand. I am just going to send them out."

"These five francs are like to cost me dear!" said Rodolphe to himself as he set to work, but he cut short his task.

"I know how fond you are of music, my dear uncle," he began, turning to Monetti, "so I have brought you some tickets for a concert."

"Very kind of you, my boy. Will you stay and dine with me?"

"Thank you, uncle; I have an invitation to dinner in the Faubourg Saint Germain. By-the-by, it is annoying; I shall not have time to go home for money, and I must buy a pair of gloves."

"You have no gloves? Will you borrow mine?"

"Thanks; no. The size is different; still, if you would oblige me by a loan of——"

"Twenty-nine sous to buy a pair? Certainly, my boy, here is the money. You must be well dressed if you go into society. Better be envied than pitied, as your aunt used to say. Come, now, you are getting on, I see. So much the better. I would let you have more," he went on, "but that is

all I have in the till; I should have to go upstairs, and I cannot leave the shop, customers drop in every minute."

"And you were saying that trade was slack!"

Uncle Monetti did not seem to hear this remark.

"There is no hurry about returning it," he said, as his nephew pocketed the coins.

"What a skinflint!" said Rodolphe, as he made good his escape. "Let us see, now—still thirty-one sous short. Where are they to come from? But, come to think of it, let us go to the Carrefour de la Providence." For thus Rodolphe was wont to designate that very centre of Paris—the Palais Royal—a spot where it is almost impossible to wait for a few minutes without meeting as many persons of your acquaintance (more particularly creditors). So Rodolphe took his stand on the steps of the Palais Royal. This time Providence was long in coming; but at last Rodolphe perceived a manifestation. It took the shape of a figure in a white hat and a green overcoat, and it carried a gold-headed cane—a very well-dressed Providence indeed.

Providence, in short, was a good-natured young fellow, and well to do, though a Socialist.

"I am delighted to see you," he said, as he encountered Rodolphe. "Come my way for a bit, and we will talk."

"Oh, come, I am condemned to the torture of Socialism," muttered Rodolphe, submitting to be dragged along by the owner of the white hat, who, indeed, badgered him without mercy. As they reached the Pont des Arts Rodolphe interrupted him.

"I must go; I have not the wherewithal to pay this toll."

"Pooh!" said the other, throwing two sous to the pensioner.

"Now for it!" thought the editor of the *Iris* as they crossed the river and arrived at the other end. He suddenly stopped short at sight of the clock at the Institut, and waved his hand despairingly towards the dial, crying—

"Confound it! A quarter to five! It is all over with me!"

"What is the matter?" asked the other in surprise.

"Just this," said Rodolphe: "you have dragged me over here in spite of myself, and, thanks to you, I have missed an appointment."

"Was it important?"

"I should think it was! I was to call for some money at five o'clock at the Batignolles; I shall never do it. Oh, confound it all! What am I to do?"

"Bless your life, it is very simple," said the Socialist. "Come home with me; I will lend you the amount."

"Impossible! You live over at Montrouge, and I have business in the Chausée d'Antin at six o'clock. Confound it all!"

"I have a little small change about me," Providence began timidly, "only a very little."

"If I had enough to pay my cab fare, I might possibly arrive at the Batignolles in time."

"That is all I have, my dear boy—thirty-one sous."

"Let me have it, quick! for I must be off," said Rodolphe. The clock had just struck five, and he ran as fast as he could to the trysting-place.

"It has been hard to come by," he reflected, as he counted over his small change. "One hundred sous; good as gold. After all, I am ready. Laure shall see that she has to do with a man who understands how to do things properly. I will not take a single centime home with me to-night. It is incumbent on me to rehabilitate literature and to prove that men of letters lack only money to be rich."

Mlle. Laure was true to her tryst.

"That is right!" said he. "Punctual as Bréguet's watches!"

They spent the rest of the evening together, and Rodolphe's spirited efforts melted his five francs in the crucible of prodigality. Mlle. Laure was fascinated by his manner, and was kind enough not to notice that Rodolphe was not taking her home until he reached his own door and brought her in.

"I am doing wrong," said she. "Never make me repent it by showing the ingratitude which is the appanage of your sex."

"Madame," said Rodolphe, "I am well known for my constancy. I carry it, indeed, to such a point that my friends all wonder at my fidelity and have nicknamed me 'a General Bertrand in love.'"

IX

POLAR VIOLETS

IN those days Rodolphe was very much in love with his cousin Angèle (who could not endure him), and the thermometer of the ingenious chevalier registered twelve degrees below freezing-point.

Mlle. Angèle was the daughter of M. Monetti, the stove dealer, whose acquaintance the reader has made already. Mlle. Angèle was eighteen years old, and had just come home after spending five years in Burgundy with a female relative who was expected to leave her her fortune. The female relative, as it chanced, was an old woman who had never been young nor handsome. On the other hand, she had always been cross-grained, although (and possibly because) she was a bigot in matters of religion. Angèle, when she left Paris, had been a charming child, giving promise already of charming womanhood; but at the end of the five years, though she was a handsome girl, she had grown frigid, prim and indifferent. A retired life in the country, the practices of exaggerated piety and the petty conscientious scruples instilled in her, had filled her mind with silly and vulgar prejudices and narrowed her imagination; while as for her heart, the functions of that organ were strictly limited—it was merely the balance-wheel of her internal

economy. The blood in Angèle's veins was (so to say) holy water. She gave her cousin a glacial reception when they met. In vain did he try to touch the tender chords of memory by talking of old days, when they played at Paul and Virginia, as cousins are very apt to do; but, after all, Rodolphe was very much in love with his cousin Angèle (who could not endure him). So when he heard that the young lady was going to the wedding dance of a girl friend he grew bold enough to promise Angèle a bouquet of violets for the occasion; and Angèle, after first asking her father's permission, accepted her cousin's polite offer, insisting at the same time, however, that they must be white violets.

Rodolphe was quite delighted to find his cousin in a better humour. He skipped away, humming as he went, to his "Mont Saint Bernard," as he called his abode, for reasons which will presently appear. But as he went through the Palais Royal he saw a bouquet of white violets in Mme. Provost's shop window, and went in out of curiosity to ask the price of that well-known dealer in flowers. A presentable bouquet, he found, would cost no less than ten francs, but there were others still more expensive.

"Ten francs, and only a week to find all that money! Hang it all! It will take some getting together; but, all the same, my cousin shall have her bouquet. I have an idea."

These things befell Rodolphe at the genesis of his literary career. At that time he was living upon fifteen francs a month allowed him by a friend, a

great poet, who, after a long sojourn in Paris, had become a country schoolmaster by dint of influence. Rodolphe, however, must have had extravagance for his fairy godmother, for his allowance was always spent in four days; and since he could not bring himself to abandon his sacred but scarcely remunerative profession of elegiac poet, he nourished himself for the rest of the month on such chance crumbs as fell at long intervals from the basket of Providence. His Lent had no terror for him; he even carried through it gaily, thanks to a stoical sobriety and an exuberant imagination on which he drew daily, and so contrived to hold out till the first of the month—the Easter Day which terminated his fast.

In those days Rodolphe lived in the Rue Contrescarpe Saint Marcel, in a big old house which used to be known as "L'Hôtel de l'Eminence grise" because Père Joseph (Richelieu's instrument) had dwelt there, so it was said. The house is one of the tallest in Paris, and Rodolphe lodged at the very top of it. His room was a sort of belvedere, a delightful abode in summer, but between October to April a miniature Kamschatka. The four cardinal winds made their way in through the four windows which faced the points of the compass, and executed furious quartettes all winter through; while the chimney-opening, as if in irony, was so large that it might have been a state entrance made on purpose for Boreas and all his suite.

Cold weather had no sooner set in than Rodolphe devised a systematic plan for obtaining fuel, dividing what little furniture he had into successive "fellings" of timber, by which means his possessions

were considerably reduced by the end of the week. A bedstead and a couple of chairs were still left, but these again (to tell the truth) were made of cast-iron, and by their nature insured against fire. Rodolphe styled this way of keeping a fire "a removal up the chimney."

It was the month of January, and the thermometer, which registered twelve degrees of frost on the Quay des Lunettes, would have gone down another point or two, if anyone had carried it up to the belvedere which Rodolphe called "Mont Saint Bernard," "Spitzbergen" and "Siberia."

When Rodolphe came home that night, after promising his cousin a bunch of white violets, he flew into a great fury. The four cardinal winds had broken another pane of glass in a game of puss in the corner; it was the third accident of the kind within the fortnight, and Rodolphe broke out into a storm of imprecations against Æolus and all his destructive family.

He then stopped up the new breach with the portrait of a friend, and lay down dressed as he was between his two mattresses, as he was pleased to call a couple of paillasses stuffed with flock and hard as boards. And all night long he dreamed of white violets.

But five days went by; Rodolphe had found no way of realising his dream, and on the next day but one he was to give his cousin her bouquet. The thermometer meanwhile had dropped still lower, and despair fastened upon the wretched poet as he reflected that the price of violets had probably risen. Providence at last took pity on him, and this is how it came about.

Polar Violets

One morning Rodolphe dropped in to ask his friend Marcel, the painter, to give him breakfast, and found the latter in conversation with a woman in widow's weeds. It appeared that she lived in the neighbourhood, and having recently lost her husband, wanted to know how much it would cost to paint a man's hand on the tombstone with the following inscription—

"MY CHERISHED WIFE, I WAIT FOR THEE."

To obtain a reduction she pointed out to the artist that when it should please God to send her to rejoin her husband, a second hand would have to be painted with a bracelet on the wrist, and a second inscription thus conceived—

"ONCE MORE UNITED NOW ARE WE."

"I shall put it in my will," the widow was saying, "and I shall stipulate that you shall have the commission."

"Since that is the manner of it, madam, I accept your terms—but it is with the expectation of the handsel to come. Do not forget me in your will."

"I should like to have it done as soon as possible," the widow went on; "still, take your time, and don't forget the scar on the thumb. I want a hand that looks like life!"

"It shall be a speaking likeness, madam; be easy as to that," said Marcel, walking to the door with her. But just as the lady was going out she turned back.

"I have still something to ask you, mister painter," she said. "I should like to have a what-

do-you-call-it in poetry put on my husband's tomb, saying what a good man he was, and his last words on his death-bed. Is that the correct thing?"

"Quite correct. That is what is called an epitaph. Very correct indeed!"

"I suppose you don't know anybody who can do one for me, cheap? There is my neighbour, M. Guérin, of course, the letter-writer, but he asks the coat off one's back!"

Rodolphe gave Marcel a look, and Marcel grasped the situation at once.

"Madam," he said, indicating Rodolphe, "a fortunate chance has brought someone here who may be of use to you under these painful circumstances. This gentleman is a distinguished poet—you could not find a better."

"I must have something sad," said the widow, "and the spelling must be faultless."

"Madam, my friend has his spelling at the tips of his fingers. He carried off all the prizes at school."

"Indeed!" said the widow, "my nephew took a prize too, and yet he is only seven years old!"

"A very precocious child!" said Marcel.

"But," said the widow, returning to her point, "does this gentleman make sad poetry?"

"None better, madam; he has seen a great deal of trouble. My friend is particularly competent. Sad poetry he generally writes—they are always reproaching him for it in the papers."

"What!" cried the widow, "do they put him in the papers? Then he must be quite as learned as M. Guérin, the letter-writer!".

"Far more learned. Apply to him, madam; you will not repent it."

The widow gave the poet the gist of the matter for the poetry on her husband's tomb, and agreed to pay him ten francs if she was pleased with it. Only, she must have it at once. The poet undertook to let her have it the very next day, through his friend.

"Oh, Artemisia! kind fairy," cried Rodolphe when the widow had departed; "thou shalt be contented, I promise thee. I will yield thee good measure of funeral song, and the spelling shall be better turned out than a duchess. Ah! good old creature, may Heaven reward thee; mayest thou attain, like good brandy, to the hundred and seventh year of thine age!"

"I am opposed to that!" Marcel cried.

"True," said Rodolphe, "I was forgetting that you have one more hand to paint after her decease, and such longevity would keep you out of your money." And raising his hands, he added, "Heed not my prayer, O Heaven!—Ha, a fine bit of luck for me that I came here to-day!" he added.

"By-the-by, what did you want?"

"I am just thinking it over now, especially as I shall be obliged to sit up all night over this poetry. I cannot do without the things I came to ask for, to wit: First, a dinner; secondly, some tobacco and a candle; thirdly, your polar bear costume."

"Are you going to a fancy ball? The first one comes off to-night."

"No, I am not; but, such as you see me, I am as hard-frozen as the Grande Armée on the Retreat

from Moscow. My green lasting coat and check merino trousers are very pretty, of course; but too spring-like altogether, and adapted to an equatorial climate. If you live so near the north pole as I do, a polar bear's costume is more suitable—I may even say it is indispensable."

"Take Bruin," said Marcel. "It is a good idea; the thing is as hot as a brazier; you will feel like a loaf in the oven."

Rodolphe was already in the animal's pelt.

"Now," he cried, "what a furious rage the thermometer will be in!"

"Are you going out like that?" Marcel asked when they had finished a vague sort of dinner served on hall-marked plates of the value of one sou.

"By Jove! much I care what people say of me. Besides, to-day is the first day of Carnival." So he walked across Paris with a gravity befitting the original owner of the skin, and passing Chevalier's thermometer, saluted it with a derisive thumb to his nose.

On entering his room (after giving the porter a terrible fright), the poet lighted his candle, taking a world of pains to surround it with a transparent paper screen to thwart the malice of the north wind, and set to work at once. But he was not long in finding out that if he was tolerably warm inside his costume, his hands were not. He had not written a couple of lines of epitaph before numbness attacked his fingers so savagely that he was forced to drop the pen.

"The bravest man cannot fight against the ele-

ments," said Rodolphe, falling back paralysed in his chair. "Cæsar passed the Rubicon, but he would have stuck fast in the Bérésina."

All at once the poet raised a shout of joy from the depths of his bear-skin, and got up so suddenly that he sent a deluge of ink over his white fur. An idea had occurred to him. He took a hint from Chatterton.

Drawing a considerable mass of manuscript from under the bed, he found among them some ten huge bundles of his famous tragedy, *The Avenger*. In the course of some two years' work upon it he had written, cancelled, and rewritten so many times that the copies altogether weighed more than fourteen pounds. Rodolphe put the latest version aside, and hauled the rest across to the fireplace.

"I *knew* I should find an opening—with patience," he cried. "Here is a pretty faggot of manuscript, and that's a fact. Ah! if I could but have foreseen what was going to happen I would have written a prologue, and there would be so much the more to burn now. . . . But there, one cannot foresee everything." And he set several sheets alight in the grate and warmed his hands at the flames. In another five minutes the first act of *The Avenger* had gone off brilliantly and Rodolphe had written three lines of the epitaph.

Nothing can describe the astonishment of the four winds when they discovered the blaze in the hearth.

"'Tis an illusion!" piped the north wind as he amused himself with ruffling up the white bear's fur.

"Suppose we go and blow down the stove-pipe," suggested another wind, "that would set the chimney smoking." But just as they were beginning to pester poor Rodolphe the south wind caught sight of M. Arago at a window in the Observatory shaking a warning finger at the whole quartette of them. So the south wind cried to his brothers—

"Quick! let us be off at once, the weather prophet says there will be calm weather to-night; we have broken the Observatory rules, and if we are not in by midnight M. Arago will have us kept in."

Meantime the second act of *The Avenger* burned most successfully, and Rodolphe had written ten lines. But during the third act he only managed to finish two more.

"I always thought that act was too short," he muttered, "but you never find out the defects till you see a thing on the stage. Luckily the next act will last longer; there are twenty-three scenes, and one of them—the throne-room scene—was to witness my glory." The last piece of declamation from the throne-room scene whisked up the chimney in a flight of sparks, and Rodolphe had still another six lines to write.

"Now for the fifth act," he said, as he warmed himself at the blaze. "It will last quite five minutes, it is one long soliloquy." Then came the catastrophe, a brief flare-up followed by darkness, while Rodolphe was setting forth the last words of the dear defunct with magical lyrical flourishes. "There is still enough left for another night's per-

formance," he said to himself as he pushed the rest of his manuscript back under the bed.

Next evening, at eight o'clock, Mlle. Angèle entered the ballroom carrying a superb bouquet of white violets, with two white roses in the middle. All through the evening the women admired her flowers and the men made pretty speeches to their wearer. So Angèle was not altogether ungrateful to the cousin who contributed to give these little gratifications to her vanity; and perhaps she might have thought more of him if it had not been for the persevering gallantry of a relative of the bride. This was a young fellow with fair hair and a superb moustache that turned up at the ends in a couple of hooks, which always catch novices' hearts. So Angèle danced several dances with him, and he asked her for the two white roses which still remained in the middle of her much-fingered bouquet . . . and Angèle refused, but at the end of the evening she left the roses on a bench and forgot to take them, and the fair-haired young man rushed across to pick them up.

At that very moment there were fourteen degrees of frost in the belvedere, and Rodolphe, leaning against the window-bars, was looking towards the Barrière du Maine to see the lighted windows of the ballroom where Angèle danced—cousin Angèle who could not endure him.

X

THE CAPE OF STORMS

IN the month which opens each new season of the year there are two terrible epochs, which usually fall upon the first and the fifteenth day. Rodolphe, who never could behold the approach of either of these dates without misgivings, called them "The Cape of Storms." When that day comes, it is not the dawn that flings open the portals of the east, but a host of creditors, duns, landlords, bailiffs' men and other persons acquainted with the art of serving writs. That day begins with a downpour of accounts, invoices, receipts and stamped paper of all kinds and ends with a hail shower of protested bills. *Dies iræ!*

It so fell out that on the morning of the 15th of April Rodolphe was sleeping quite peacefully, and dreaming that an uncle had left him a province in Peru, with all the fair Peruvians in it, when—just as he was swimming at large in an imaginary Pactolus—the sound of a key turning in the lock disturbed the heir-presumptive at the most brilliant moment in the whole golden dream.

Rodolphe sat bolt upright in bed, his eyes (and wits) still befogged with slumber, and, staring about him, became aware that somebody was in the room.

A man was standing there in the middle of the floor. What sort of man might he be?

The early riser in question wore a cocked hat; he had a wallet on his back and a big portfolio in his hand; his coat was a sort of uniform of greyish violet; and finally he appeared to be much out of breath after a climb of five flights. He was, however, a person of very affable demeanour, though his sonorous footsteps gave you the impression that a money-changer's counter might produce, if it could find means of locomotion.

For a moment Rodolphe was alarmed. At sight of the cocked hat he fancied he had to do with a member of the police force, but the passably well-stuffed wallet put an end to his mistake.

"Ha! I have it," thought he. "Here comes a first instalment of my legacy; the man has come from the Indies! But how is it that he is not a negro?"

Beckoning to the visitor, he said, pointing to the bag, "I know what that is; put it down there, please."

The man, a messenger from the Bank of France, responded to the invitation by submitting a piece of paper, covered with hieroglyphics and figures in many-coloured inks, to Rodolphe's inspection.

"Do you want a receipt?" asked Rodolphe. "Right. Hand me the pen and ink off the table, there."

"No; I have come to take something of you," said the collector. "This is a bill for a hundred and fifty francs. To-day is the fifteenth of April."

"Oh!" returned Rodolphe, taking a closer look

at the bill. "Bill of Birmann's. That's my tailor. Alas!" he added in a melancholy voice, looking from an overcoat on the bed to the bill, and back again at the overcoat, "causes go, but the effects come back again. What! is to-day the fifteenth of April? An extraordinary thing; I have not had any strawberries yet!"

The collector grew tired of this dawdling, and went, saying as he did so—

"You have till four o'clock."

"Honest folk are not bound to an hour," retorted Rodolphe. "The swindler!" he added, as he watched the departure of the man of finance in the cocked hat. "He is walking off with the bag!"

Rodolphe drew his bed-curtains, and tried to find the way back to his inheritance; but he missed the path, and somehow or other entered, swelling with pride, upon a dream in which the manager of the Théâtre Français came to him, hat in hand, to ask for a tragedy for his theatre. And Rodolphe, knowing the way to set to work, was asking for a premium, when, just as the manager seemed ready to give way, the sleeper was again partly awakened by a visitor—another creature of the 15th of April.

This was M. Benoît, inappropriately so named, the landlord of the lodging-house. M. Benoît combined the three several occupations of landlord, bootmaker and moneylender to his lodgers; and this morning he was hideously redolent of bad brandy and pay-day. In his hand was an empty bag.

"Confound it!" thought Rodolphe. "It is not

the manager of the 'Français,' . . . for he would wear a white tie . . . and the bag would be full."

"Good day, M. Rodolphe," said M. Benoît, coming to the bedside.

"M. Benoît! Good day. To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"Why, I came in to say that to-day is the fifteenth of April!"

"Already! How quickly time goes! It is extraordinary. I positively must get a pair of nankeen trousers. The fifteenth of April. Dear me! I should not have thought of it but for you, M. Benoît. I owe you a debt of gratitude."

"You owe me a hundred and sixty-two francs as well!" M. Benoît continued; "and it is time the little account was settled."

"I am not exactly pressed, M. Benoît; there is no need to put yourself out. I will let you have time. Little accounts grow into big ones."

"But you have put me off already several times."

"In that case let us settle it, M. Benoît; let us settle it. It is a matter of absolute indifference to me—to-day or to-morrow. And besides, we are all of us mortal. Let us settle it."

A beaming smile lighted up the landlord's wrinkles, and everything about him, down to his empty bag, swelled visibly with hope.

"What do I owe you?" asked Rodolphe.

"Three months' rent, in the first place, at twenty-five francs; that is seventy-five francs."

"Errors and omissions excepted. What next?"

"Next: three pairs of boots at twenty francs."

"One moment, M. Benoît, one moment; let us

keep clear of muddles. I have nothing to do with the landlord now; this is the bootmaker. I want a separate account. Figures are serious things; we must not get confused."

"So be it," returned M. Benoît, softened by the hope of putting a receipt at the foot of every bill. "Here is a separate memorandum for the boots. Three pairs of boots at twenty francs makes sixty francs."

Rodolphe looked pityingly at the down-trodden pair on the floor.

"Alack!" he thought; "if the Wandering Jew had had them in wear, they could not well look worse. And yet, it was running about after Marie that brought them to this. Go on, M. Benoît."

"Say sixty francs," resumed the landlord. "Next: money advanced, twenty-seven francs."

"Hold on, M. Benoît. We agreed that every saint should have his own shrine. It was as a friend that you lent me the money. So now, if you please, we will leave the domain of boots and enter upon the domains of confidence and friendship, which require a separate account. How much does your friendship for me amount to?"

"Twenty-seven francs?"

"Twenty-seven francs. You have a friend at a cheap rate, M. Benoît. So, finally, let us say seventy-five, sixty and twenty-seven—how much is that?"

"One hundred and sixty-two francs."

"A hundred and sixty-two francs," said Rodolphe; "'tis an extraordinary thing. What a fine thing addition is! Well, M. Benoît, now the accounts are

settled, we can both of us be easy; we know where we are. Next month I will ask for your receipt; and as in the meantime your confidence in me and your friendship can only grow, you may, if necessary, grant me a further delay. And if the landlord and the bootmaker should prove too urgent, I will entreat the friend to bring them to reason. It is an extraordinary thing, M. Benoît; but every time I think of your triple character I feel tempted to believe in the Trinity."

As the master of the house listened to Rodolphe he turned red, green, yellow and white; the rainbow tints of wrath deepening more and more in his countenance at each new gibe from his lodger.

"I do not care to be made game of, sir! I have waited long enough. I give you notice, and if you have not paid the money by to-night, I shall see what I shall do."

"Money! money! am I asking you for money? And what is more, I would not give you any if I had it. On a Friday it is unlucky."

M. Benoît's wrath grew to a tempest. If the furniture had not belonged to him, he would assuredly have fractured the legs of some of the chairs. As it was, he went out breathing threats.

"You are forgetting your bag," Rodolphe called after him.

"What a life!" muttered the wretched young man when he was alone. "I would rather tame lions."

"Still," he went on, as he jumped out of bed, "I cannot stay here. The invasion of the allies will continue. I must retreat; I must also breakfast. Stay, now; suppose I go to see Schaunard?

I will ask him to lay a knife and fork for me, and borrow a few sous of him. A hundred francs might do. Let us go to see Schaunard."

On his way downstairs Rodolphe met his landlord. M. Benoît had met with repulses from other lodgers, as his empty bag, that object of art, plainly showed.

"If anyone asks for me, tell them I am away in the country, or gone to the Alps," said Rodolphe. "Or no, say that I have gone for good."

"I shall tell them the truth," muttered M. Benoît, laying a highly significant stress on the words.

Schaunard lived at Montmartre. There was the whole breadth of Paris to cross, a pilgrimage of the most dangerous kind for Rodolphe.

"The streets are paved with duns to-day," said he to himself.

Still, he did not go by the outer ring of boulevards, as he had at first a mind to do. A fantastic hope, on the contrary, encouraged him to take the dangerous central route through the heart of Paris. It seemed to him that on such a day when millions of francs were walking abroad in collectors' wallets, it might well be that some banknote for a thousand francs was lying deserted by the wayside awaiting a good Samaritan. Rodolphe went about softly, his eyes on the ground. But he only picked up a couple of pins.

In two hours' time he reached Schaunard's lodging.

"Ha! it is you!"

"Yes, I have come to ask you for lunch."

"Oh, my dear fellow, you come inopportunely; my mistress has just come, and I have not seen her for a fortnight. If you had only looked in ten minutes earlier——"

"You have not a hundred francs or so to lend me, have you?"

"What! You too!" returned Schaunard, astonished beyond all measure. "Are *you* asking me for money? Are you in league with my enemies?"

"I will pay you back on Monday."

"Or at Trinity. My dear fellow, you surely forget what day it is. I can do nothing for you. But there is no need to despair, the day is not over yet. You may still come across Providence, who never gets up before noon."

"Oh, Providence is too busy looking after the sparrows. I shall go to Marcel."

At that time Marcel was living in the Rue de Bréda. Rodolphe found him much depressed, meditating before his great picture, which was intended to represent "The Passage of the Red Sea."

"What is the matter?" asked Rodolphe, as he came in, "you look half dead with mortification!"

"Alas! yes. It is a fortnight since I entered upon Holy Week," said the painter—an allegorical allusion which, for Rodolphe, was clear as spring water.

"Pickled herrings and radishes!" said he. "Very good. I remember." And, indeed, recollections of a time when he himself had been reduced to a diet composed exclusively of that fish were still salt in Rodolphe's memory.

"The devil! this is serious! I came to borrow a hundred francs of you."

"A hundred francs!" exclaimed Marcel. "So you go in for the fantastic as usual. To come and ask me for this fabulous sum at a time when every-

body touches the equator of necessity! You have been taking haschish."

"Alas! I have taken nothing whatever," said Rodolphe; and with that he left his friend on the shores of the Red Sea.

Between twelve and four that afternoon Rodolphe made the tour of all the houses of his acquaintance; he beat up the forty-eight quarters, and walked about twenty miles without any result whatsoever. The influences of the 15th of April made themselves everywhere felt with the same rigour; what was more, the hour of dinner was drawing near, and it hardly seemed as if dinner were drawing any nearer with the hour, and Rodolphe felt as though he were starving on the raft of the *Medusa*.

But as he crossed the Pont Neuf an idea suddenly struck him, and he turned back.

"Oho! The fifteenth of April! the fifteenth of April! Why, I have an invitation to dinner for to-day." Fumbling in his pocket, he drew out a printed handbill thus conceived:—

BARRIÈRE DE LA VILLETE.

AT THE SIGN OF THE "GREAT CONQUEROR."

GREAT HALL TO SEAT 300 PEOPLE.

ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

IN HONOUR OF THE BIRTH

OF THE

HUMANITARIAN MESSIAH.

APRIL 15TH, 184–.

ADMIT ONE PERSON.

N.B.—THE BEARER IS ENTITLED TO ONE HALF-BOTTLE OF WINE ONLY.

"I do not share the opinions of the Messiah's disciples," said Rodolphe to himself, "but I will very readily share their meal." With bird-like speed he covered the distance which separated him from the barrier, and on reaching the hall of the "Great Conqueror" found an enormous crowd. Five hundred persons were already assembled in the hall, which would seat three hundred. And a vast perspective of veal and carrots unrolled itself before Rodolphe's eyes.

At length they began to serve the soup. But just as the guests were raising the first spoonful to their mouths in walked five or six individuals in black coats and a number of policemen with a commissary at their head.

"Gentlemen," said this functionary, "the authorities will not allow the banquet to take place. I call upon you all to withdraw!"

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, as he went out with the crowd, "alas for the fatality which has overturned my soup."

Sadly he went back home again, and reached his own door about eleven o'clock. M. Benoît was waiting for him.

"Oh! it is you," said he. "Have you thought over what I said this morning? Have you some money for me?"

"I ought by rights to have some to-night. I will let you have it in the morning," returned Rodolphe, searching for his key and candlestick, and finding neither.

"I am very sorry, M. Rodolphe, but I have let your room, and I have not another at liberty! You must look elsewhere."

Rodolphe was not pusillanimous by nature, a night out of doors had no terrors for him. Besides, if it should come on to rain, he could sleep at a pinch in the stage box at the Odéon, as he had already done once before. So he only asked M. Benoît for his "things," the said "things" consisting of a mass of papers.

"That is only fair," returned the landlord. "I have no right to keep them; they are in the desk. Step upstairs with me; if the person who has taken your room has not gone to bed, we may be able to get in."

The room had been let during the day to a young girl named Mimi, with whom Rodolphe had once begun a sentimental duet. They recognised each other at once. Rodolphe whispered something in Mimi's ear, and gently pressed her hand.

"Look how it rains!" he said. There was a sound of a downpour without—a storm had just burst.

Mlle. Mimi went straight up to M. Benoît as he waited in a corner of the room.

"Monsieur," she said, "this gentleman (indicating Rodolphe) was the visitor I was expecting this evening. I am not at home to anyone."

"Oh! very well," said M. Benoît, with a grimace.

Midnight struck while Mlle. Mimi was hastily preparing an improvised supper.

"Ah!" said Rodolphe to himself, "the fifteenth of April is over; at last I have doubled the Cape of Storms. Dear Mimi," the young man added, drawing her to his arms and putting a kiss on the back of her neck, "you could not possibly have put me out at the door. You have the bump of hospitality."

XI

A CAFÉ IN BOHEMIA

THESE are the circumstances under which Carolus Barbemuche, literary man and Platonic philósopher, became a member of Bohemia in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

In those days Gustave Colline, the great philosopher; Marcel, the great painter; Schaunard, the great musician; and Rodolphe, the great poet (for so they styled each other among themselves), used to be regular frequenters of the Café Momus. Other people nicknamed them "The Four Musketeers," because they were always seen together; and, indeed, they came together, went together, played cards together, and at times declined to pay their score, all with an accord worthy of an orchestra at the Conservatoire.

They had selected for a meeting-place a room amply large enough for forty people to sit in with comfort, but they always had it to themselves because in the long run they succeeded in making it impossible for any regular customers to set foot in it. Any chance comer venturing into the den fell a victim to the grim quartette, and most of them promptly fled, leaving newspaper and coffee alike unfinished, for their unheard-of aphorisms on

art, sentiment and political economy were enough to turn the cream. The conversation of the four worthies was of such a nature that the waiter who took their orders had become an idiot in the flower of his age.

Things, however, got to such a pitch at last that the proprietor lost patience and came up one evening to make a categorical statement of his grievances.

Imprimis. M. Rodolphe had come in at lunch time and carried all the newspapers off to "his" room, pushing unreasonableness to such lengths that he was angry unless he found the wrappers intact. Whence it followed that other regular customers, deprived of the organs of opinion, remained until dinner-time ignorant as carp of political news, and the Bosquet circle scarcely knew the names of the members of the last Cabinet.

M. Rodolphe had even compelled the café to take the *Castor*, which he edited himself. The proprietor had refused at first, but as M. Rodolphe and his company used to summon the waiter every quarter of an hour, calling out: "The *Castor!* bring us the *Castor!*" the curiosity of other customers was roused by these frenzied demands, and they too asked for the *Castor.* So the café took in a copy of the *Castor*, a monthly journal devoted to the hat trade, with a vignette and an article on philosophy under the heading of "Varieties," by Gustave Colline.

Item. The said M. Colline and his friend M. Rodolphe, seeking relaxation from intellectual labours, were in the habit of playing backgammon

from ten o'clock in the morning till twelve o'clock at night; and as the establishment only possessed a single backgammon board, other persons finding that these gentlemen had forestalled them, were balked in their passion for the game. Every time that the board was asked for the aforesaid gentlemen only replied, "Backgammon is in hand! Call again to-morrow." And the Bosquet circle was thereby reduced to piquet and relating the story of their first loves.

Item. M. Marcel, disregarding the fact that a café is a place of public resort, had taken it upon himself to bring his easel and paint-box and all the instruments of his art. He even pushed the nuisance so far as to bring in models of both sexes, which might offend the Bosquet circle's sense of propriety.

Item. M. Schaunard, following his friend's example, talked of moving in his piano, and was not afraid to sing in chorus a selection from his symphony, "The Influence of Blue on the Arts." M. Schaunard had gone farther. He slipped a transparency into the lamp before the door of the café, on which might be read: "Vocal and Instrumental Music. Free lessons to be had within by ladies and gentlemen; for particulars apply at the bar."

Wherefore the said bar was filled every night by carelessly dressed persons who came in to ask "how to get the lessons." What is more, M. Schaunard made appointments here with a lady of the name of Phémie Teinturière, who always forgot to wear anything on her head. For which reason M.

Bosquet, junior, declared that he would never again set foot inside an establishment where all the laws of nature were thus set at defiance.

Item. Not content with ordering only a very moderate amount of refreshment, the gentlemen had tried to reduce it further still, by bringing in a spirit lamp and concocting their coffee themselves, on the pretext of an adulterous connection detected between chicory and the coffee of the establishment, and by sweetening the beverage with sugar obtained elsewhere at a low price—an insult to the laboratory.

Item. Corrupted by the discourse of the aforesaid gentlemen, the waiter Bergami (so called because of his whiskers), forgetful of his humble origin, and regardless of all decency, had ventured to address a copy of verses to the lady behind the counter, inciting her to forget her duties as a wife and mother. From the licence of his style it is evident that this piece was composed under the pernicious influences of M. Rodolphe and his writings.

The proprietor of the establishment consequently felt, with regret, that he was compelled to request M. Colline and friends to find some other spot for the discussion of their subversive doctrines.

Gustave Colline, the Cicero of the company, took it upon himself to reply, and *à priori* showed the proprietor of the café that his complaints were absurd and unfounded, that they did him great honour by choosing the establishment for an intellectual centre, and that the departure of himself and his friends would be the ruin of a place thus

elevated by their presence to the dignity of an artistic and literary café.

"But you order so little, you and those that come to see you," objected the proprietor.

"The sobriety of which you complain tells in favour of our morals," retorted Colline. "Besides, it is entirely your doing that we do not spend a great deal more. You have only to open an account."

"And we would keep it," added Marcel.

The proprietor did not seem to understand. He went on to ask for some explanation of the flaming love-letter addressed to his wife by Bergami. Rodolphe, accused of acting as secretary to this illicit passion, vehemently protested his innocence. "Besides," added he, "madame's virtue was a secure barrier, which——"

"Oh!" said the proprietor, with a smile of pride, "my wife was brought up at Saint Denis."

Briefly, Colline contrived to bind the man fast in the toils of his insidious eloquence, and all was arranged on the following conditions: The four friends engaged never again to make coffee for themselves; the establishment was to receive a copy of the *Castor* gratis; Phémie Teinturière was not to come again bareheaded; the Bosquet circle were to have the use of the backgammon board every Sunday from twelve to two o'clock in the afternoon; and last, but by no means least, there were to be no new applications for credit.

For some days all went well.

Then, on Christmas Eve, the four friends arrived at the café with three ladies.

There were Mlle. Musette, Mlle. Mimi (Rodolphe's new mistress, an adorable creature with a voice like the clash of cymbals), and Phémie Teinturière (Schaunard's idol), who that evening wore a cap. As for Mlle. Colline, nobody ever saw her; she always stayed at home, and was busy punctuating the manuscripts of the four gentlemen. After coffee, with an escort of liqueurs in honour of the occasion, they called for punch, and the waiter was so little accustomed to these grand doings that the order had to be repeated twice. Phémie had never been treated in a café before. The idea of drinking out of a glass with a stem to it appeared to send her into an ecstasy of delight. Marcel, suspicious of the origin of Musette's new bonnet, was quarrelling with her about it; Mimi and Rodolphe, still in the honeymoon stage, were carrying on a curious conversation in articulate sounds; while, as for Colline, he went from woman to woman with most gracious airs, gallantly stringing together for their benefit all the elegant extracts culled from the collection of the *Almanach des Muses.*

While this joyous company gave themselves up to mirth and laughter a stranger at a solitary table at the back was watching the lively scene before him with an odd expression on his face.

Every evening for a fortnight, or thereabouts, he had come in and sat there in the same way. He alone of all the customers had been able to stand the terrific racket made by the Bohemians. His courage unshaken by the most atrocious jokes, he stayed there all the evening through, puffing with

mathematical regularity at his pipe, his eyes intent as if he were guarding a treasure, his ears open to all that was going on about him. In other respects he appeared to be of mild manner and easy fortune, for he possessed a watch, retained in bondage by a gold chain; and one day Marcel had detected him in the act of changing a gold piece at the counter. From that hour he was known among the four friends as "the capitalist."

All at once Schaunard, whose sight was excellent, noticed that the glasses were empty.

"By Jove," said Rodolphe, "it's Christmas Eve! We are all good Christians; we ought to do something out of the common."

"On my word, we ought. Let us ask for something superhuman," said Marcel.

"Colline, just give the bell a pull," added Rodolphe.

Colline pulled frantically at the bell.

"What are we going to have?" asked Marcel.

Colline bent himself up like a bow, and said, glancing at the women—

"It is for the ladies to settle the nature and order of the refreshments."

"*I* should not be afraid of some champagne," announced Musette, smacking her lips.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Marcel. "Champagne is not a wine at all to begin with!"

"So much the worse. I like it; it pops!"

"I like Beaune better, in a little basket," said Mimi, looking languidly at Rodolphe.

"Are you going out of your senses?"

"No; but I should like to," said Mimi, on whom

Beaune produced a peculiar effect; and Rodolphe was struck dumb at her words.

"As for me," cried Phémie Teinturière, bouncing up and down on the sofa springs, "I should very much like some *parfait amour;* it is good for the digestion." Upon which Schaunard made some remarks with a nasal intonation which made Phémie shake in her shoes.

"Aha!" said Marcel, "let us spend a hundred thousand francs, just for once."

"And besides," added Rodolphe, "they are grumbling in the bar because we do not take enough. We must plunge them into amazement."

"Yes," said Colline, "let us indulge in a gorgeous banquet. Beside, we owe these ladies a passive obedience. Love lives by devotion, wine is the juice of pleasure, pleasure is the duty of youth. Women are flowers, and ought to be watered. Let us water them. Waiter! Waiter!"

Colline hung upon the bell-pull, jerking it feverishly, and the waiter came hurrying in with the speed of the wind.

But when he heard talk of champagne and Beaune, and all sorts of liqueurs, every shade of surprise crossed over his countenance.

"There is a hole in my inside," remarked Mimi; "I should be glad of some ham."

"I should like sardines and butter," said Musette.

"And I some radishes," added Phémie, "and a bit of meat with them."

"Say at once that you mean to have supper," said Marcel.

"That would do well enough for us," said the women.

"Waiter, bring up supper," said Colline gravely; and the waiter turned red, white and blue with astonishment. He went slowly down to the bar, and informed the proprietor of the extraordinary orders which he had been given. The proprietor at first took it for a joke, but when the bell rang again he went upstairs himself and spoke to Colline, for whom he entertained a certain respect. Colline explained that they wished to keep the festival at his establishment, and asked him to be good enough to attend to their orders.

The proprietor turned off on his heel without a word, tying knots in his table napkin as he went. For a quarter of an hour he took counsel of his wife, and that lady, who, thanks to a liberal education at Saint Denis, had a weakness for art and letters, persuaded her husband to send up the supper.

"After all, they very likely may have money for once," he said, and telling the waiter to take up all that was ordered, he became absorbed in a game of piquet with an old customer. A fatal piece of imprudence.

From ten o'clock till midnight the waiter did nothing but go up and downstairs. Extras were called for every minute. Musette must be served in the English style, with a clean knife and fork for every mouthful; Mimi drank every kind of wine from every glass; Schaunard seemed to have a Sahara which nothing could slake in his throat; Colline was executing a cross fire with his eyes, and biting holes in his serviette while he squeezed the table leg, which he mistook for Phémie's knee.

But as for Marcel and Rodolphe, they kept a tight hand over themselves, and saw, not without uneasiness, that the hour of reckoning was at hand.

The stranger sat watching this scene with a grave curiosity. From time to time his mouth was seen to unclose as if for a smile; and a noise was heard like the creak of a window-sash suddenly drawn down. It was the stranger laughing to himself.

At a quarter to twelve the lady behind the counter sent in the bill. It reached phenomenal proportions; it amounted to twenty-five francs seventy-five centimes.

"Let us see," said Marcel; "we will draw lots as to who shall go and parley with the proprietor. This is going to be serious."

They took the box of dominoes and drew for the highest number, and as ill fortune would have it, Schaunard was marked out as plenipotentiary. Schaunard was an excellent amateur, but a wretched diplomatist, and he arrived in the bar just as the proprietor had lost his game. Momus, writhing under the disgrace of three capotes, was in a murderous mood, and at Schaunard's very first entrance upon the subject flew into violent passion. Schaunard was a good musician, but his temper was deplorable; he replied with double-barrelled insults. The quarrel was embittered. The proprietor went upstairs to intimate that nobody should leave the house till the bill was paid. Colline tried to intervene with dispassionate eloquence, but just then the proprietor chanced to perceive the table napkin which Colline had torn into lint, and with redoubled fury he even went so far as to lay a pro-

fane hand on the philosopher's nut-brown overcoat and the ladies' pelisses, threatening at the same time to hold them in pledge.

A platoon fire of insults ensued between the Bohemians and the master of the house, whilst the ladies talked of love affairs and dresses.

This roused the stranger from his impassive demeanour; he had gradually risen, made first one step in their direction and then another, walking like a natural person; and coming up to the proprietor, he took him aside and spoke for a moment in a low voice. Rodolphe and Marcel followed this with their eyes. The proprietor finally went out, saying, "Certainly, M. Barbemuche, certainly; I have no objection. Arrange it with them."

M. Barbemuche went back to his table for his hat, put it on his head, wheeled to the right, and made three steps of it to the spot where Rodolphe and Marcel were standing. Then he took off his hat and bowed to the men, saluted the ladies, pulled out a pocket-handkerchief, blew his nose and began slowly—

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for the indiscretion which I am about to commit. I have been burning to make your acquaintance this long while past, but until now I have not met with a favourable moment for introducing myself. Will you permit me to seize the opportunity which to-day presents itself?"

"Certainly, certainly!" said Colline, perceiving the stranger's drift; and Rodolphe and Marcel bowed in silence, when all was very nearly lost through Schaunard's exquisite delicacy of feeling.

"Allow me, monsieur!" he said, with some asperity; "you have not the honour of knowing us, and it would not do for us to—er—oh, would you be so kind as to let me fill my pipe? And whatever my friends may say I say too."

"Gentlemen," said Barbemuche, "I, like you, am a disciple of the arts. So far as I can tell from what I have heard of your talk, our tastes are the same. I have the keenest desire to be numbered among your friends, and to be able to meet you here of an evening. The proprietor of this establishment is a brute, but I have had a word or two with him, and you are now at liberty to withdraw. I venture to hope that some way of meeting you here on these premises may be left open to me; if you accept the little service which——"

The red of indignation mounted to Schaunard's countenance.

"He is speculating upon our position," he said, "and there is nothing for it but to accept. He has paid our bill. I will play him at billiards for the twenty-five francs, and give him odds."

Barbemuche accepted this proposal and had the sense to lose; and this fine trait in his character won him the esteem of Bohemia.

They separated after arranging to meet again next day.

"By doing so," Schaunard remarked to Marcel, "we owe him nothing; our dignity is safe."

"We can almost require another supper," added Colline.

XII

A RECEPTION IN BOHEMIA

ON the evening that he paid out of his own pocket the cost of the supper consumed at the café by the Bohemians, Carolus contrived to leave in the company of Gustave Colline. Since he had assisted at the reunions of the four friends in the estaminet where he had pulled them out of their scrape, Carolus had specially taken note of Colline, and was beginning to feel a great affinity for this Socrates, of whom later he was to become the Plato. For this reason it was that from the first he had decided to choose him as his introducer into their circle.

On their way Barbemuche asked Colline if he would go in and take something in a café which was still open. Colline not only declined, but considerably quickened his pace as he passed the place, and carefully drew his superlatively imposing felt hat low down over his eyes.

"Why won't you go in?" asked Barbemuche with polite insistence.

"I have my reasons," replied Colline. "In that establishment the lady at the desk gives a good deal of attention to the exact sciences, and I do not care just now to enter upon a long discussion with her.

Indeed, I make a practice of avoiding it by never going through this street at midday, or, for that matter, at any other hour when the sun is shining. Oh! it is very simple," ingenuously added Colline. "I have lived in this neighbourhood with Marcel."

"I should, nevertheless, have liked to offer you a glass of punch, and had a little chat with you. Don't you know some other place hereabouts where you could go in without being troubled by these —mathematical difficulties?" added Barbemuche, who wished to be tremendously lively.

Colline considered for an instant.

"Here," he said, indicating a little wine shop close at hand, "is a small establishment where I am on a better footing."

Barbemuche made a grimace, and seemed to hesitate. "Is it a decent place?" he inquired.

From his glacial reserved air, his fine tones, his discreet smile, and, above all, his chain with its little dangling charms, and his watch, Colline imagined that Barbemuche was in the service of some embassy, and thought he was afraid of compromising himself by entering a cabaret. "There is no fear of our being seen," he said; "at this hour all the diplomatic body is in bed." Barbemuche decided to go in; but at the bottom of his heart he would have been glad to have had on a false nose. By way of precaution he asked for a private room, and carefully fastened a table napkin across the panes of the glass door. This done, he grew more at ease, and ordered a bowl of punch. A little elevated by the heat of the liquor, Barbemuche grew communicative, and after having given some

details about himself, he ventured to express the hope he entertained of becoming a member formally and officially of the Society of Bohemians, and solicited the support of Colline to assist him in this ambitious design.

Colline replied that for his part he placed himself entirely at the disposal of Barbemuche, but for more than that he could not speak certainly and absolutely.

"I promise you my voice," he said, "but I cannot take upon myself to dispose of the voices of my comrades."

"But," said Barbemuche, "upon what grounds could they refuse to admit me?"

Colline put down upon the table the glass he was carrying to his lips, and with a very serious air addressed the ambitious Carolus much to this effect—

"You cultivate the fine arts?" he asked.

"I labour modestly in those noble fields of intelligence," replied Carolus, who affected to be a stylist.

Colline found the phrase well chosen, and he bowed.

"You know music?" he said.

"I play the double-bass."

"It is a philosophical instrument. It gives forth grave sounds. Then, if you understand music, you know that one cannot, without disturbing the laws of harmony, introduce a fifth executant into a quartette without that ceasing to be a quartette.

"It would become a quintette," said Carolus.

"Eh?" said Colline.

"Quintette."

"Quite so. The same as if to the Trinity, the

divine triangle, you added another person. It would no longer be the Trinity, it would be four—a square —and there you have a religion faulty in principle."

"Pardon me," said Carolus, whose reasoning faculties began to stumble among the roots of Colline's logic. "I do not quite see——"

"Look, and follow me," continued Colline. "Do you understand astronomy?"

"A little. I am bachelor——"

"There's a song about that," put in Colline, 'Bachelier de Lisette.' I don't remember the tune, but in that case you will know that there are four cardinal points. Very good. If a fifth cardinal point should obtrude, the whole harmony of nature would be overthrown. That is what is called a cataclysm. You comprehend?"

"I wait the conclusion."

"In effect, the conclusion of the discourse; as death is the termination of life and marriage that of love. Very well, my dear sir, my friends and I are accustomed to live together, and we are afraid of seeing by the introduction of another the disturbance of the concord which reigns in our manners, opinions, tastes and characters. We look one day, I tell you frankly, to be the four cardinal points of contemporary art. It would be annoying to us to see a fifth cardinal point——"

"When one is four, however," hazarded Carolus, "one may just as well be five."

"Yes, but one is no longer four."

"That is a futile pretext."

"There is nothing futile in the world; all is in all. The little streams make the great rivers; the

little syllables form the great Alexandrines; and the mountains are composed of grains of dust. It is in the *Wisdom of Nations.* There is a copy of it on the quay."

"You think, then, that these gentlemen will raise objection to my admission to the honour of their intimate company?"

"So I in*fer,* like the bear," said Colline, who never neglected this pleasantry.

"You said?" asked Carolus, astonished.

"Pardon me; it is a little gem of a jest," replied Colline. "Tell me, then, my dear sir, which is the path you most prefer in the noble fields of intellect?"

"The great philosophers and the good classic authors are my models. Their study is my nourishment. Telemachus first inspired me with the passion which is devouring me."

"Telemachus. He is a good deal upon the quay," said Colline. "I have just come upon him to-day, and I bought him for five sous, for it was a chance. However, I will forego it for your benefit. It is good work, and well written, for the time."

"Yes," continued Carolus, "the higher philosophy and pure, healthy literature; those are my aspirations. In my opinion art is a religion."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Colline; "there is also a song about that," and he hummed—

> "'Yes, art is a cult
> That believers must serve.'

I think it is in *Robert le Diable,*" he added.

"I observed, then, that art, being a solemn function, writers ought constantly——"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Colline, who heard

a late hour striking, "it is to-morrow morning, and I am afraid of causing anxiety to a very dear friend of mine. Besides," he murmured to himself, "I promised to be back. It is her day."

"Indeed, it is late," said Carolus, "let us be going."

"Do you live far?" inquired Colline.

"10, Rue Royale St. Honoré."

Colline had once had occasion to go to that house, and remembered it as a magnificent mansion.

"I will mention you to these gentlemen," he said to Carolus as they parted, "and rest assured that I will use all my influence to render them favourable towards you. Ah, but let me give you a piece of advice."

"Speak," said Carolus.

"Be amiable and gallant to Mesdemoiselles Mimi, Musette and Phémie. These ladies exercise influence over my friends, and if you get on the right side of them you will obtain the more easily what you desire of Marcel, Schaunard and Rodolphe."

"I will endeavour," said Carolus.

Next day Colline dropped into the midst of the Bohemian brotherhood. It was the breakfast hour, and breakfast had come with the hour. The three families were seated at table devoting themselves to a feast of peppered artichokes.

"Well I never!" said Colline, "there is good cheer here. That can't last long. I come," he added, "as ambassador from the generous mortal whom we met last night in the café."

"Has he sent to ask payment of the money he laid down for us?" asked Marcel.

"Oh!" said Mlle. Mimi, "I should not have thought that of him; he had such a pleasant way with him."

"It has nothing to do with that," replied Colline. "This young man wishes to be one of us. He desires to take an active part in our society, and to share, of course, in its advantages."

The three Bohemians lifted their heads and looked at each other.

"Well, now," concluded Colline, "the discussion is an open one."

"What is the social position of your protégé?" asked Rodolphe.

"He is not my protégé," said Colline. "Last night, when I left you, you asked me to follow him; he, on his part, invited me to accompany him. That was all right enough. I went with him. He showed me very pleasant attentions, and treated me to first-class drinks, but I maintained my independence."

"Very good," said Schaunard.

"Sketch us a few of the principal traits of his character," said Marcel.

"Greatness of soul, austere manners, shrinking from entering wine shops, bachelor of letters, the soul of candour, plays the double-bass, a nature that can sometimes change a five-franc piece."

"Very good," said Schaunard. "What are his hopes?"

"I have already told you. His ambition has no bounds. He aspires to be one of us."

"That is to say, he wants to make use of us," said Marcel. "He would like to be seen driving in our carriages."

"What art does he follow?" asked Rodolphe.

"Yes," continued Marcel, "what's his game?"

"His art?" said Colline. "What's his game? Literature and philosophy combined."

"What are his philosophical subjects?"

"He practises departmental philosophy; he calls art a religion."

"A religion!" said Rodolphe, with amazement.

"He says so."

"And what is his path in literature?"

"He favours Telemachus."

"Very good," said Schaunard, chewing at his artichoke fodder.

"What? Very good, idiot?" interrupted Marcel. "I advise you not to say that in the street."

Schaunard, annoyed at this reprimand, gave a little kick under the table to Phémie, who was making an invasion into his sauce.

"Once more," said Rodolphe, "what is his position in the world? What are his means of living, his name, his dwelling-place?"

"His status is honourable; he is professor of all sorts of things in the bosom of a rich family. His name is Carolus Barbemuche; he spends his revenues in the habitations of luxury, and lodges in the Rue Royale.

"Furnished lodgings?"

"No, he has furniture."

"I ask a hearing," said Marcel. "It is clear to me that Colline has been corrupted. He has sold his vote

in advance for the price of a little glass or two. Don't interrupt," continued Marcel, on seeing the philosopher rise to protest, "you can reply presently. Colline, a venal soul, has presented this stranger to you under an aspect too favourable to allow of its being an image of truth. I repeat that I see the designs of this stranger; he wants to speculate with us. He has said to himself, 'Those are fellows making their way. I will put my hand in their pockets—my fingers in their pie—with them I shall attain to fame.'"

"Very good," said Schaunard. "Isn't there any more sauce?"

"No," replied Rodolphe, "the edition is exhausted.

"Moreover," continued Marcel, "this insidious mortal who patronises Colline aspires to the honour of intimacy with us only with culpable thoughts. We are not alone here, gentlemen," continued the orator, casting expressive looks at the girls, "and Colline's protégé is introducing himself at our firesides under the mantle of literature. He may be nothing but a vile seducer. Reflect! For my part, I vote against admitting him."

"I ask a hearing only for a rectification," said Rodolphe. "In his remarkable oration Marcel has said that Carolus, the person in question, desired to dishonour us by introducing himself under the mantle of literature."

"It is a correct figure," said Marcel.

"I object to it. It is bad. Literature has no mantle."

"Since I fulfil here the functions of reporter," said Colline, rising to his feet, "I shall maintain the conclusions of my report. The jealousy devouring him seems to scare the common sense of our friend Marcel: the great artist is beside himself——"

"Order!" shouted Marcel.

"Beside himself to such a point that he, such an excellent designer, introduces into his discourse a figure of speech of which the orator who has succeeded me at this tribune has revealed the inaccuracy."

"Colline is an idiot!" cried Marcel, giving the table such a violent thump with his fist as to create a profound sensation among the plates and dishes. "Colline understands nothing of sentiment. He is utterly incompetent in such matters. He has an old leather book in place of a heart." (Shouts of laughter from Schaunard.)

During this uproar Colline gravely shook the crumbs from the folds of his white cravat. When silence was re-established he continued his discourse.

"Gentlemen," he said, "with a single word I am going to banish from your minds the chimerical fears which the suspicion of Marcel may have generated in them touching Carolus."

"Try to extinguish them," cried Marcel in bantering tones.

"It will not be more difficult than that," replied Colline, putting out with a breath the match with which he had lighted his pipe.

"Speak! speak!" cried with one voice Rodolphe,

Schaunard, and the girls, who found immense interest in the debate.

"Gentlemen," said Colline, "notwithstanding that I have been personally and violently attacked, notwithstanding that I have been accused of selling the influence I may exercise among you for a glass of spirits—I, strong in my conscience, shall not reply to the attacks made on my probity, on my loyalty, on my morality. (Emotion.) But there is a thing which I desire to maintain respected—myself. (Here the orator gave himself two blows on his waistcoat with his fist.) It is my prudence and circumspection, so well known to you, which have had doubt cast on them. I am accused of wishing to bring among you a man who has hostile designs on your domestic happiness. This supposition is an insult to the virtue of these ladies, and more, an insult to their good taste. Carolus Barbemuche is extremely ugly. (Visible denial upon the face of Phémie Teinturière. Disturbance under the table, made by Schaunard, who corrects with his foot the compromising frankness of his young friend.)

"But," continued Colline, "that which will reduce to powder the miserable argument which my adversary uses for a weapon against Carolus, in working upon your fears, is that the said Carolus is a Platonist." (Sensation among the men, dismay among the women.)

"Platonist!" demanded Phémie. "What does that mean?"

"It is a malady among men who do not dare to make love to ladies," said Mimi. "I had a lover like that once for a couple of hours."

"Rubbish!" said Mlle. Musette.

"You are quite right, my dear," said Marcel. "Platonism in love is water in wine, you know. Give us pure wine."

"And long live youth!" said Musette.

Colline's words had created a favourable reaction towards Carolus. The philosopher deftly profited by the turn of affairs produced by his eloquent and adroit exculpation.

"And now," he continued, "I cannot see what just obstacles can be raised against this individual, who, after all, has done us service. As for me, who stand accused of creating trouble by wishing to introduce him among us, I consider the opinion derogatory to my dignity. I have acted in the matter with the prudence of the serpent, and if a vote to that effect is not made to accredit me with such prudence, I shall offer my withdrawal."

"Do you wish to make a cabinet question of it?" said Marcel.

"I do," replied Colline.

The three Bohemians consulted together, and by common consent agreed to restore to the philosopher the character for lofty prudence which he claimed. Colline then left the word to Marcel, who, somewhat recovered from his objections, declared that he would perhaps vote for the reporter's conclusions. Before, however, passing to the final vote which would confer on Carolus the intimacy of Bohemia, Marcel put this amendment:—

"Since the introduction of a new member to the Society is à grave matter, seeing that a stranger

might import elements of discord into it by ignoring the manners and habits, the characters and opinions of his comrades, each one of the members should pass a day in the company of the said Carolus, and devote himself to inquiry into his mode of life, his tastes, his literary capacity and his wardrobe. The Bohemians would then communicate their respective particular impressions to each other, and pronounce upon refusal or admission; also before the accordance of such admission Carolus should undergo a novitiate of a month, that is to say, that for that period he should not address them in terms of intimate friendship nor give them his arm in the street. On the day of reception a splendid fête was to be given at the expense of the novice. The cost of these rejoicings not to exceed twelve francs."

This amendment was carried by a majority of three to one, that being Colline, who considered that sufficient confidence had not been placed in him, and that the amendment was a renewed attack upon his prudence.

The same evening Colline went very early to the café, in order to be the first to see Carolus.

He had not long to wait. Carolus soon arrived, carrying three enormous bouquets of roses.

"Good gracious!" said Colline in amazement, "what are you going to do with this garden?"

"I remembered you told me yesterday that your friends would probably come with their ladies. They are very beautiful, and it is for them that I bring these flowers."

"But flowers can be had for fifteen sous."

"What!" said Carolus, "and in December? If you said fifteen francs——"

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Colline. "Three crowns for these simple gifts of Flora. What folly! You must be made of money. But, my dear sir, they are fifteen francs that will have to be thrown out of the window."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Colline thereupon related the jealous suspicions which Marcel had instilled into his friends' minds, and told Carolus of the stormy discussion which had taken place among the Bohemians on the question of his introduction to the circle. "I protested that your intentions were immaculate," added Colline, "but the opposition was none the less keen. You must be careful, therefore, not to arouse the jealous suspicions conceived against you by being too polite to the ladies. And to begin with, we will put those bouquets out of sight."

And Colline, taking the roses, hid them in a cupboard.

"But that is not all," he added; "these gentlemen desire, before linking themselves in close intimacy with you, to devote themselves each one separately to an inquiry into your character, your tastes, etc." Then, in order that Barbemuche should not be too much hurt with his friends, Colline rapidly sketched out a moral portrait of each of the Bohemians. "You must try and accord with the humours of each," added the philosopher, "and in the end they will all be for you."

Carolus gave unqualified consent.

The three friends soon arrived, accompanied by the ladies.

Rodolphe was polite to Carolus, Schaunard was familiar, Marcel remained cold. As for Carolus, he exerted himself to be gay and pleasant with the men, while he was very distant towards the girls.

On parting Barbemuche invited Rodolphe to dine with him next day, asking him, however, to come to him at midday.

The poet accepted.

"Good," he said to himself. "It is I who am to initiate the inquiries."

On the next day, at the appointed hour, Rodolphe went to call on Carolus. Barbemuche indeed lodged in a very handsome house in the Rue Royale, and his room had a certain air of comfort, but Rodolphe was astonished to see that, although it was broad daylight, the shutters were closed, the curtains drawn, and a couple of lighted wax candles were on the table. He asked Barbemuche to explain this.

"Study is the daughter of mystery and of silence," replied Barbemuche. They sat down and began to chat. After about an hour's conversation Carolus, with patience and not a little dexterity of speech, brought out a phrase which, in spite of its modest form, was nothing more nor less than a request that Rodolphe would listen to a little bit of work which was the fruit of his nights of studious application.

Rodolphe saw that he was trapped. Moreover, as he was curious to see the colouring of Barbemuche's style, he bowed politely, assuring him that he should be delighted to——"

Carolus did not wait to hear more. He ran and bolted the door of the room, securing it carefully, then he returned to Rodolphe, taking a little copy-book narrow in shape—and thin enough to bring a smile of satisfaction and relief to the poet's face.

"Is that the manuscript of your work?" he asked.

"No," replied Carolus, "it is the catalogue of my manuscripts, and I am looking for the number of the one you permit me to read to you. Here it is —'Don Lopez or Fatality,' number fourteen. It is on the third shelf," he added, as he opened a small cupboard, in which Rodolphe saw with dismay an enormous quantity of manuscripts. Taking one out, Carolus closed the cupboard and seated himself opposite the poet. Rodolphe glanced at the four copy-books composing the work, written upon paper about the size of the Champ de Mars.

"Come," he said to himself, "it is not in verse, but it is called 'Don Lopez.'"

Taking the uppermost book, Carolus began to read—

"'One cold winter's night two horsemen, enveloped in the folds of their cloaks and mounted on slow-pacing mules, rode side by side along one of the roads which traverse the frightful solitude of the deserts of the Sierra Morena——'"

"Where am I?" thought Rodolphe, confounded by this opening. Carolus continued to read the first chapter, all in the same style.

Rodolphe listened with vague attention, thinking at the same time of some way of escape.

"There is the window," he thought to himself; "but, besides its being shut, we are on the fourth floor. Oh! now I understand all these precautions."

"What do you think of my first chapter?" asked Carolus. "I beg you won't spare criticism."

Rodolphe recollected having heard somewhere before the rags of declamatory philosophy on suicide put forth in the name of Lopez, hero of the novel, and answered at hazard—

"The great figure of Don Lopez is studied conscientiously; it recalls the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*. The description of Don Alvar's mule pleases me immensely. One might imagine it to be a sketch of Géricault's. The description of the landscape has some fine lines. As to the sentiments, they are of Jean Jacques Rousseau's grain—Rousseau sown in the ground of Le Sage. Only permit me one remark, you put too many commas, and you abuse the phrase 'in former days.' They are charming words, fitting excellently now and again, and giving colour, but they should not be abused."

Carolus took his second book, and again read out, "'Don Lopez or Fatality.'"

"I knew a Lopez once," said Rodolphe. "He sold cigarettes and Bayonne chocolate. Perhaps he was related to yours. Go on."

At the end of the second chapter the poet interrupted Carolus.

"Don't you feel your throat getting tired?" he asked.

"Not in the least," replied Carolus. "Now you shall hear the story of Inésille."

"I am very curious to do so; but if you are tired," said the poet, "you must not——"

"Chapter three," said Carolus in a clear voice.

Rodolphe scanned Carolus attentively, and noted that he had a very short neck and a sanguine complexion. "There is one more hope," thought the poet, when he had made this discovery. "It is apoplexy."

"We will pass on to chapter four. You will be kind enough to tell me what you think of the love scene."

And Carolus resumed his reading.

Just as he looked at Rodolphe to read in his face the effect his dialogue was producing, Carolus perceived that the poet, bending over his chair, was holding his head in the attitude of a man who hears distant sounds.

"What is the matter?" asked Carolus.

"Hush!" said Rodolphe. "Don't you hear? I fancy I hear them calling 'Fire!' Shall we go and see?"

Carolus listened for an instant, but heard nothing.

"My ears deceived me," said Rodolphe. "Go on. Don Alvar prodigiously interests me. He is a noble youth."

Carolus continued, putting all the music of his organ of speech into Don Alvar's words—

"'Oh, Inésille, whatever you may be, angel or fiend, and whatever may be your country, my life is yours, and I will follow you—whether it be to heaven or to hell.'"

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and a voice called Carolus outside.

"It is my messenger, I expect," he said, going to the door and partially opening it.

It was the porter; he brought a letter. Carolus opened it hurriedly.

"How unfortunate!" he said. "We shall be obliged to put off the reading till another time. This letter compels me to go out immediately."

"Oh," thought Rodolphe, "that letter must have fallen from heaven. I recognise the hand of Providence."

"If you like," continued Carolus, "we will go together to the place this message comes from, and afterwards we will dine."

"I am at your disposal," said Rodolphe.

In the evening, when he rejoined his friends, the poet was catechised by them concerning Barbemuche.

"Are you pleased with him? Has he treated you well?" asked Marcel and Schaunard.

"Yes, but it has cost me dear," said Rodolphe.

"How? Did Carolus make you pay?" demanded Schaunard, with growing indignation.

"He read me a romance in which there is a Don Lopez and a Don Alvar, and in which the leading characters call their mistress angel or fiend."

"How hateful!" said the Bohemians in chorus.

"But otherwise," said Colline, "putting literature aside, what is your opinion of Carolus?"

"He is a good sort. For the rest, you can make your observations personally. Carolus understands that he has to treat with us one after the other. Schaunard is invited to breakfast to-morrow morning. Only," added Rodolphe, "when you go to

Barbemuche's, beware of the manuscript cupboard. It is a dangerous piece of furniture."

Schaunard was punctual to his appointment, and took upon himself the duties of an auctioneer and a broker's man. He also returned in the evening well primed with his notes of observation. He had studied Carolus from the furniture point of view.

"Well," his friends inquired, "what is your opinion?"

"Oh!" replied Schaunard, "this Barbemuche is a conglomerate of good qualities; he knows the names of all the wines, and made me eat all kinds of delicacies, such things as are not even to be seen at my aunt's on her birthday. He appears to be a great patron of the tailors of the Rue Vivienne, and of the bootmakers of the Panoramas. I also noticed that he is about our size, so that in an emergency we can lend him our clothes. His manners are less severe than Colline wanted to make out; he let himself be taken wherever I wished to lead him, and paid for a breakfast for me in two acts, of which the second took place at a drinking-shop in the market-place, where I am known only for my orgies in carnival time. Carolus went in there quite naturally. That is all! Marcel is invited for to-morrow."

Carolus was aware that Marcel was the one among the Bohemians who had put the greatest obstacles in the way of his reception into their circle. He therefore treated him with special circumspection, and found his way into the artist's favour by holding out a hope that he would be able to procure him commissions to paint the portraits of the members of his pupil's family.

A Reception in Bohemia

After Marcel had made his report the friends no longer displayed the hostile prejudice they had at first shown towards Carolus.

On the fourth day Colline informed Barbemuche that he was admitted.

"What! I am received?" said Carolus joyfully.

"Yes," replied Colline, "but under correction."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that you have a number of little vulgar ways which you must correct."

"I will endeavour to imitate you," replied Carolus.

During all the time of his novitiate the platonic philosopher assiduously frequented the company of the Bohemians, and being thus put to deep study of their manners and ways, he was not without experiencing occasional sensations of astonishment.

One morning Colline entered Barbemuche's room with a radiant countenance.

"Well, my dear fellow," he said to him, "you are definitely one of us now. It is settled. There only remains to fix the day of the grand fête, and where it shall take place. I have come to arrange this with you."

"That can easily be done," replied Carolus. "My pupil's parents are in the country just at present; the young viscount to whom I am mentor will lend me his apartments for an evening. In that way we shall be more at our ease; only we must invite the young viscount."

"That will be all right," replied Colline. "We will open up the literary horizon to him. But do you think he will come?"

"I'll answer for that."

"Then it remains only to fix the day."

"We will settle it this evening at the café," said Barbemuche.

Carolus went at once in search of his pupil, and informed him that he was about to be received as a member into a famous literary and artistic society, and that to celebrate the reception he proposed to give a dinner, followed by a little fête; he invited him to join his party of guests.

"And as you must not be out late, and the fête will last late into the night for the general convenience," added Carolus, "we will give the little entertainment here in these rooms. François your man is discreet, your parents will not know anything about it, and you will have made acquaintance with the most intellectual people in Paris—artists and authors!"

"Printed?" asked the youth.

"Printed?—certainly. One of them is the editor of the *Iris*," which your mother reads. They are very distinguished persons, almost celebrated. I am their intimate friend; they have charming wives."

"There will be women?" said Viscount Paul.

"Charming women," replied Carolus.

"Oh! my dear sir, I thank you. Yes, certainly we will have the fête here. We will light up all the lustres, and I will have the furniture cleared out."

In the evening at the café Barbemuche announced that the affair was to take place on the following Saturday.

A Reception in Bohemia

The Bohemians instructed their mistresses to prepare their toilettes.

"Do not forget," they said, "that we are going into real drawing-rooms. Therefore, mind, the dresses must be simple, but rich."

No time was lost in informing the whole street that Mlles. Mimi, Phémie, and Musette were going into the great world.

And this is what happened on the morning of the great occasion. Colline, Schaunard, Marcel and Rodolphe went in file to Barbemuche, who was astonished to see them so early.

"Has any accident occurred to defer the fête?" he asked uneasily.

"Yes and no," replied Colline. "This is how it is. Among ourselves, you know, we never use any ceremony; but when we go among strangers we must observe a certain decorum."

"Well?" said Barbemuche.

"Well," continued Colline, "as to-night we are to meet a young gentleman who opens his rooms to us, respect to him and to ourselves tells us that our attire, somewhat neglected, may be compromising. We come simply to ask you if you could for this evening lend us a few clothes of a fashionable cut. It is impossible for us, you can understand, to enter under this sumptuous roof in pâletots and short jackets."

"But," said Carolus, "I haven't four dress coats."

"Oh," said Colline, "we will manage with those you have."

"Look for yourselves, then," said Carolus, opening his fairly well-stocked wardrobe.

"Ah, but you have a complete arsenal of elegancies there."

"Three hats!" said Schaunard ecstatically, "what is the good of three hats when one has only one head?"

"And the boots," said Rodolphe. "Only look!"

"There are boots?" shrieked Colline.

And in a twinkling each had found a complete equipment.

"To-night," said they, as they left Barbemuche, "the ladies intend to be dazzling."

"But," said Barbemuche, casting his eye over his rifled portmanteau and cases, "you haven't left me anything. How am I to receive you?"

"Ah, you. That is different," said Rodolphe. "You are the host; you can set etiquette aside."

"But," said Carolus, "there is nothing left save a dressing-gown, a pair of long pantaloons, a flannel waistcoat, and a pair of slippers. You have taken everything."

"What does it matter? We will excuse you in anticipation," replied the Bohemians.

At six o'clock a very handsome dinner was served in the dining-room. The Bohemians arrived. Marcel walked lamely, and was in a vile humour. Young Viscount Paul hurried to meet the ladies, and conducted them to the best places. Mimi wore a highly fanciful toilette, Musette was dressed in most provocative style, Phémie was like a window garnished with glasses of all colours. The dinner lasted two hours and a half, and was uproariously merry.

Young Viscount Paul was deeply smitten with

Mimi, who was his neighbour at table, and Phémie asked for a second help of everything. Schaunard put vine leaves in his hair, Rodolphe improvised sonnets and broke glasses in marking the rhythm, Colline chatted with Marcel, who was still very cross.

"What is the matter?" asked Colline.

"My feet are in frightful agony, and that bothers me. This Carolus has got the foot of a fine lady."

"But," said Colline, "it will be enough to let him understand that that sort of thing mustn't happen again, and that in future he must have his boots made a size or so too large. Make your mind easy. I will see to that. But let us go into the drawing-room, where the liqueurs are waiting for us."

The festivities recommenced with increased brilliancy. Schaunard sat down to the piano and played his new symphony "The Death of the Young Girl" with extraordinary vigour: and his beautiful piece "The Creditors' March" won the honours of a triple encore. Two strings of the piano were broken.

Marcel's moroseness continued, and when Carolus grumbled at him for it, he replied—

"My dear sir, it is plain we shall not always be intimate friends, and for this reason. Physical dissemblances are almost invariably sure indications of moral dissemblance. Philosophy and medicine are agreed on the point."

"Well?" said Carolus.

"Well," said Marcel, displaying his feet, "your

boots, infinitely too narrow for me, indicate that we have not the same disposition. For the rest of it, your little entertainment has been charming."

About one in the morning the Bohemians went away, returning home by devious ways. Barbemuche was indisposed, and maundered out foolish discourses to his pupil, who in his turn dreamed of Mimi's blue eyes.

XIII

THE HOUSE-WARMING

THESE events took place some little time after the poet Rodolphe had first set up housekeeping with Mlle. Mimi, when for a whole week the Bohemians had been very uneasy about him, for he was nowhere to be found. They had sought for him in all his customary haunts, and everywhere met with the same answer—

"We have not seen him for a week past."

Gustave Colline was especially disturbed, and for this reason. Some days previously he had entrusted to Rodolphe an article on the "Higher Philosophy," which Rodolphe was to insert in the occasional column of the *Castor*, the hatters' paper of which he was editor. Had this philosophical article appeared to the eyes of astonished Europe? That was the question which exercised the unhappy Colline; and his anxiety will be understood when it is explained that as yet the philosopher had not known the dignity of print, and that he was burning with desire to see what effect his Ciceronic printed prose would produce. In order to procure this satisfaction, he had already expended nearly six francs in the reading-rooms of the literary institutions of Paris, but had failed to come upon the *Castor*.

No longer able to contain himself for anxiety, Colline took a mental oath that he would not rest until he had laid hand on the missing editor of the journal.

Assisted by opportunities which it would take too long to relate, the philosopher contrived to keep his oath. Two days later, knowing where Rodolphe lived, he arrived at the door of the house at six o'clock in the morning.

Rodolphe's apartment was in a furnished lodging-house of an obscure street in the Faubourg Saint Germain, where he resided on the fifth floor only because it had not a sixth. When Colline arrived at the door he did not find the key in it. He knocked for a good ten minutes without receiving any answer. The early morning clatter at last drew even the attention of the porter, who came and requested Colline to desist.

"You might know the gentleman is asleep," he said.

"And on that account I wish to waken him," said Colline, renewing his knocks.

"He won't answer you then," said the man, as he put down at Rodolphe's door a pair of well-polished boots and a pair of woman's boots which had also been well attended to.

"Wait a minute," said Colline, taking up the male and female foot gear. The masculine boots were brand new. "I must have mistaken the door," he went on; "my business is not here."

"But," said the attendant, "whom are you seeking?"

"Woman's boots!" continued Colline, speaking

to himself, as he recalled his friend's austere mode of life. "Yes, undoubtedly I have made a mistake. This cannot be Rodolphe's room."

"Excuse me, sir. It is."

"Eh? No. It is you who are mistaken, my friend."

"What?"

"I am certain you are in error," went on Colline, pointing to the polished boots. "What are those?"

"They are Monsieur Rodolphe's boots. What is there astonishing in that?"

"And these?" rejoined Colline, pointing to the small pair. "Are these also Monsieur Rodolphe's, pray?"

"They are the lady's," said the man.

"The lady's!" exclaimed Colline. "Ah, the Sybarite! That is why he would not open."

"Hang it!" said the porter, "the young man is his own master. If you will give me your name, I will go in and inform Monsieur Rodolphe."

"No," said Colline. "Now I know where to find him I will return presently," and he went back post-haste to announce the startling intelligence to his friends.

The polished boots were treated as fabulous—due to the wealth of Colline's imagination, and it was unanimously agreed that the lady was a paradox.

The paradox was nevertheless a truth, for the same evening Marcel received a letter intended for all the friends collectively. It was couched in the following terms:—

"Monsieur Rodolphe, man of letters, and Madame Rodolphe request the pleasure of your company to dine with them tomorrow evening at five o'clock precisely.

"N.B.—There will be plates."

"Gentlemen," said Marcel, as he proceeded to communicate the missive's contents to his companions, "it is certain that Rodolphe has a mistress; more, he invites us to dinner, and," continued he, "the postscript promises table appointments. I do not conceal from you that this clause appears to me a poetical exaggeration. However, we shall see."

Next day at the appointed hour Marcel, Gustave Colline and Alexandre Schaunard, as hungry as if it were the last day of Lent, repaired to Rodolphe's lodging. They found him playing with an Angora cat, while a young woman was laying the table.

"Gentlemen," said Rodolphe, as he shook hands with his friends and pointed to the young woman, "allow me to introduce to you the mistress of the house."

"You are the house, aren't you?" said Colline, who was infected with this kind of wit.

"Mimi," said Rodolphe, "let me present to you my best friends. And now bring the soup."

"Oh, madame," said Alexandre Schaunard, hurrying towards Mimi, "you are as fresh as a wild flower!"

After convincing himself that there really were plates on the table, Schaunard proceeded to ascertain what there was to eat, pushing curiosity to the extent of lifting the lids of the saucepans in which the dinner was simmering. The presence of a lobster created a lively impression on him. As to Colline, he at once drew Rodolphe on one side to inquire about his philosophical article.

"My dear fellow, it is at the printer's. The *Castor* will appear next Tuesday."

We refrain from picturing the delight of the philosopher.

"Gentlemen," said Rodolphe, "I must ask your pardon for being so long before giving you news of myself, but it was my honeymoon"; and he recounted the history of his union with the charming creature who had brought him as her dowry her eighteen and a half years, two porcelain cups and an Angora cat who was called "Mimi," like herself. "And so, gentlemen," said Rodolphe, "to-night we have a house-warming. I warn you for the rest of it that our repast will be a homely one. The truffles will be replaced by the sincerest cordiality."

Nor did the amiable young divinity Mimi cease to reign pre-eminent among the friends. They found that that night's feast, though it might be frugal, was not wanting in a certain distinction. Rodolphe, in fact, had put himself to some expense. Colline noticed that the plates were changed, and loudly declared that Mademoiselle Mimi was worthy of the azure scarf with which the empresses of the oven and the spit are decorated—words which were Sanskrit to the young girl until Rodolphe translated them for her by saying "that she would make an excellent queen of cooks."

The entrance of the lobster upon the scene excited general admiration. Under pretence of studying natural history Schaunard asked permission to dissect it. He profited by the occasion to break a knife, and he gave himself the largest share,

which excited general indignation. But he was not troubled with excess of delicacy, especially in the matter of lobster, and as a bit of it still remained he had the audacity to put it aside for himself, remarking that it would serve him for the model of a picture of still life which he had in hand.

Indulgent friendship feigned to believe in this lie, a product of immoderate gluttony. As for Colline, he reserved his sympathies for the dessert, and maintained his ground in most heartless fashion against Schaunard, who wanted to exchange an orange confection for his piece of rum cake.

Conversation now began to wax animated. To three bottles with a red seal succeeded three bottles with a green seal, in the midst of which appeared a flask whose neck and mouth were adorned with a silver helmet. It was hailed as one of the batch from Royal Champenois, a fancy champagne concocted from the vines of Saint Ouen, and sold in Paris at two francs the bottle, on account, as the wine merchants who vended it said, of bankruptcy.

But it is not the country which makes the wine, and our Bohemians accepted the liquor served out to them in the appropriate glasses as the real stuff, and in spite of the small amount of vivacity displayed by the cork as it escaped from its bonds, they were all loud in praise of the fizz it made. Schaunard employed what remained of his cool audacity in mistaking Colline's glass for his own, leading Colline to soak his biscuit in the mustard-pot, while entertaining Mimi on the subject of the philosophical article which was about to appear in the *Castor*.

But suddenly Colline grew very pale, and asked permission to go to the window and watch the sun set, although it was now ten o'clock at night, and the sun had been in bed and asleep for ever so long.

"It is a pity the champagne has not been iced," said Schaunard, trying again to substitute his empty glass for his neighbour's full one, an endeavour which was unsuccessful.

"Madame," said Colline to Mimi, for he had now ceased to inhale the fresh air at the window, "champagne is cooled with ice, ice is formed by the condensation of water—in Latin, *aqua*. Water freezes at two degrees, and there are four seasons—summer, autumn and winter. It is that which caused the retreat from Russia. Rodolphe, give me a hemistitch of champagne."

"What does he say?" demanded Mimi, who did not understand.

"It is his little joke," said Rodolphe. "Colline means a half-glass."

Suddenly Colline gave Rodolphe a smart slap on the shoulder, and said in a thick voice, as if the words were wrapped in paste, "To-morrow is Thursday, isn't it?"

"No," replied Rodolphe, "to-morrow is Sunday."

"No, Thursday."

"No, once more, to-morrow is Sunday."

"Ah! Sunday," said Colline, his head waggling; "but to-morrow Thurs—day——" And he fell asleep with his head almost in the cream cheese on his plate.

"What is he mumbling about Thursday?" said Marcel.

"Ah! I know now," said Rodolphe, who began

to understand the philosopher's insistence, tortured as he was by his fixed idea; "it is because of his article in the *Castor*. Listen! he is dreaming out loud about it."

"Good!" said Schaunard. "He won't want any coffee, will he, madame?"

"By the way," said Rodolphe, "what about the coffee, Mimi?"

As she rose to go and prepare it Colline, who had pulled himself together a little, caught her by the waist and murmured confidentially in her ear, "Madame, coffee is indigenous to Arabia, where it was discovered by a goat. The use of it passed into Europe. Voltaire used to take seventy-two cups of it a day. I like it without sugar, but I take it very hot."

"Gracious! How learned this gentleman is!" thought Mimi as she brought the coffee and the pipes.

The hours were, however, running on apace. Midnight had struck long since, and Rodolphe endeavoured to make his guests understand that it was time to retire. Marcel, who alone was in full command of his senses, rose to go.

But Schaunard perceived that there still remained some brandy in the bottle, and declared that it could not be midnight while anything remained in the flask. As for Colline, he was seated astride on his chair, and sang in a deep bass voice, "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday."

"Ah!" said Rodolphe, terribly put about, "I can't take care of them here all night. Once it used to be well enough, but now it is quite a

different thing," he added, looking at Mimi, whose eyes, softly shining, seemed to be yearning for *solitude à deux*. What was to be done? "Advise me, Marcel," Rodolphe whispered. "Invent some little tarradiddle for getting rid of them."

"No," said Marcel, "I shan't invent, I will imitate. I remember a play in which a clever valet finds a way of putting three fellows who were as tipsy as Silenus outside his master's door."

"I remember it," said Rodolphe. "It is in *Kean*. In fact, the situation is the same."

"Very well," said Marcel, "we will see if the theatre is true to nature. Wait an instant; let us begin with Schaunard. Hi! Schaunard!" shouted the painter.

"Eh? What is it?" cried Schaunard, who seemed to be floating in a sea of mild intoxication.

"There is nothing more to drink here, and we are all thirsty."

"Ah, yes," said Schaunard, "these bottles—they are so small."

"Very well," said Marcel, "Rodolphe has decided that we shall pass the night here, and in that case something must be fetched before the shops are closed."

"My grocer lives at the corner of the street," said Rodolphe. "Schaunard, you will have to go and get from him two bottles of rum—to my account."

"Oh yes! oh yes! oh yes!" said Schaunard, taking Colline's overcoat in mistake for his own, while Colline was making lunges at the tablecloth with a knife.

"That is one settled," said Marcel when Schaunard had gone. "This fellow will be tougher. Ah! I have an idea. Eh! eh! Colline!" he shouted, giving the philosopher a violent shove.

"What? What? What?"

"Schaunard is gone, and has taken your light brown overcoat in mistake for his own!"

Colline looked round, and saw that in fact in the place where his coat had hung there was only Schaunard's little plaid cutaway. A sudden idea crossed his mind and filled him with uneasiness. Colline, after his usual custom, had been haunting the bookstalls during the day, and he had bought for fifteen sous a Finnish grammar and a little romance by Nisard, entitled *The Milkmaid's Funeral.* With these acquisitions there were seven or eight volumes of the higher philosophy which he was accustomed to carry about with him, in order always to have an arsenal to turn to for arguments in case of philosophical discussions arising. The notion of this library being in the hands of Schaunard gave him the cold shivers.

"The wretch!" cried Colline, "what did he take my coat for?"

"It was by mistake."

"But my books!—he might make a bad use of them."

"Don't be afraid. He won't read them," said Rodolphe.

"Yes, but I know him. He is quite capable of lighting his pipe with them."

"If it makes you uneasy, you can catch him up," said Rodolphe. "He has only this instant gone. You will find him at the door."

"Yes, I'll catch him up," said Colline, clapping on his hat, which was large enough to cover a family teapot.

"That's number two," said Marcel to Rodolphe. "Now you are free, I am off; and I will tell the porter not to open the door if anybody knocks."

"Good night," said Rodolphe, "and many thanks." As he returned from accompanying his friend to the street door, Rodolphe heard a prolonged noise, to which his cat responded by another noise, trying at the same time to escape through the half-open door.

"Poor Romeo!" said Rodolphe. "There is Juliet calling him. Well, go then," he added, opening the door to the animal, who made a bound from the landing into the paws of his admirer.

Alone with his beloved Mimi, who, standing before a mirror in a charming pose, was curling her hair, Rodolphe approached her and folded his arms about her. Then, like a musician who strikes a succession of chords to assure himself of the perfect tunefulness of his instrument, Rodolphe drew Mimi on his knee, and imprinted on her shoulder a long and passionate kiss, which sent a sudden thrill through her delicate frame.

The instrument was in perfect harmony.

XIV

MADEMOISELLE MIMI

OH, my friend Rodolphe, what has happened to make such a change in you? Must I believe the rumours that are circulating, and is it possible that misfortune can so completely destroy your lofty philosophy? How can I—the humble chronicler of your Bohemian days, so full of laughter and merriment—how can I record in sufficiently melancholy terms the painful occurrence which stemmed the flow of your gaiety and with one blow arrested all your paradoxes?

Oh, Rodolphe, my friend! I admit that the misfortune was great, but there, really it is not a question of drowning one's self. Blot out the past, I beg you. Flee at once the solitudes peopled with phantoms, which only perpetuate your regrets. Fly from the silence, where the echoes of remembrance are fraught with your joys and your griefs. Take courage, and cast to the four winds the name you have so loved, and with it fling afar all that you possess belonging to her. Locks of hair half kissed away by the passionate lips; the little Venetian scent flask where the breath of perfume lingers, which is for you now more dangerous than all the poisons in the world;

into the fire with the flowers of gauze, of silk and of velvet, the white jasmine, the anemones, purpled with the blood of Adonis, the blue forget-me-nots, and all the charming little bouquets which she put together in the far-off days of your brief happiness. Yes, I loved her myself—your Mimi. And I did not foresee that there would be danger to you in loving her. But take my advice; into the fire with the ribbons, the pretty ribbons, pink, blue and yellow, which she wore so alluringly round her neck; into the fire with the laces and the caps, and the veils, and the coquettish fallals, with which she adorned herself for the mathematical love arrangements with Monsieur César, Monsieur Jérôme, Monsieur Charles, and the other gallants of the Calendar, while you waited at the window shivering with the biting winds and winter frosts; into the fire, Rodolphe, and pitilessly, with all which belonged to her and can speak to you of her; into the fire with the love-letters. Ah! here is one, and you have wept over it like a fountain, my unhappy friend:—

"As you have not come in, I am going out to see my Aunt. I take with me the money which is here, as I shall want a cab.—LUCILE."

And that evening, Rodolphe, you had no dinner. Do you remember? And you came to see me and let off a shower of fireworks of jests, which bore witness to your peace of mind, for you thought Lucile was with her aunt, and if I had told you she was with Monsieur César, or with some actor or other from Montparnasse, you would certainly have murdered me. Into the fire, therefore, with this

other note, which has all the laconic tenderness of the first :—

"I am going to order a pair of boots. You must find the money without fail by the time they are done—within the next three days."

Ah, my friend, those little boots have danced many a turn when you were not the partner. To the flames with those memories, and to the wind with their ashes.

But first, oh, Rodolphe, for the love of humanity and for the honour of the *Iris* and of the *Castor*, pick up again the reins of good taste which you let fall during your egotistical sufferings, lest terrible things befall for which you would be responsible. We should return to leg-of-mutton sleeves, to pantaloons *à petit pont*, we should be be seeing hats which would offend the universe and call down the wrath of heaven.

And now the time is come to relate the story of the loves of our friend Rodolphe and Mlle. Lucile, surnamed Mlle. Mimi. It was just at the turn of his four-and-twentieth year that Rodolphe's heart was suddenly seized with this passion which exercised such an enormous influence on his life.

At the time of his first meeting with Mimi Rodolphe led the happy-go-lucky-anyhow existence which it has been the endeavour to portray in the preceding chapters. It certainly was one of the gayest sorts of misery to be found in the country of Bohemia. And when in the course of the day he had made a bad dinner and a bon-mot, he walked on the pavement, which scarcely seemed

wide enough for him, more proudly in his black coat —whose every bare seam appealed for mercy—than an emperor in his purple robes.

The circle to which Rodolphe belonged, by a pretence not uncommon to certain young people, affected to treat love as a luxury and the pretext for a jest. Gustave Colline—who had for a long time past associated himself with a waistcoat-maker whom he had rendered crooked in body and mind by making her copy the manuscripts of his philosophical treatises, day in night out—pretended that love was a sort of purgation, which it was desirable to take occasionally in order to clear off humours. Among all these false sceptics, Rodolphe was the only one who dared to speak with any reverence of love; and when they were unlucky enough to let him get upon the subject he would perorate for an hour at a time on it, chanting of the delights of being loved, the azure loveliness of the calm lake, the music of the breeze, the harmonies of the stars, etc., etc. This had earned him from Schaunard the nickname of the "Harmonicon." Marcel had also found a very nice name for him in connection with these sentimental and German tirades, as also in allusion to his premature baldness, and called him the "Bald Forget-me-not." The truth of it was that Rodolphe about that time seriously believed that he had done with all the things of youth and love; he merely chanted the *De profundis* for his heart, which he believed to be dead; but it was only sleeping. It was ready to waken, eager for happiness and more susceptible than ever to all the delightful anguish which

he had never hoped to know again, but which were now driving him to despair. Ah, you desired it, Rodolphe! and we will not pity you; for this pain that you suffer is the one to be most desired, especially if one feels it incurable.

Rodolphe had first met Mimi when she was the mistress of one of his friends, and he had made her his own. At first there was a tremendous to-do among Rodolphe's friends when they heard of his union; but as Mlle. Mimi was very sociable, no fool, and endured the smoke of their pipes and their literary discussions without a headache, they got used to her and treated her as a comrade. Mimi was a charming woman, and her disposition admirably suited the poetic and plastic nature of Rodolphe. She was twenty-two, *petite* in figure, delicate, full of roguery. Her face was of an aristocratic type, but her features, which were of extreme delicacy, though they were softly illumined by the light of her limpid blue eyes, were overcast in moments of ennui or of ill-humour by an expression of cruelty that was almost savage, and a physiognomist might have seen in it the indications of profound egoism or of great insensibility. Generally, however, it was a charming countenance, brightened by a sweet, spontaneous smile and a tender expression touched with coquetry. Her youthful blood coursed warm and quickly in her veins, tinting her white, transparent skin like the petals of a camellia. This fragile loveliness enchained Rodolphe, and he would pass hours of the night imprinting kisses on the pale forehead of his sleeping mistress, whose humid, languorous eyes shone half-closed through the

tresses of her magnificent brown hair. But what maddened Rodolphe with passionate admiration for Mlle. Mimi were her hands, whose whiteness, in spite of household work, she knew how to preserve as entirely as if she were the goddess of idleness herself. Yet these hands, which were so fragile, so small, so soft to the touch of his lips, those childlike hands into whose keeping Rodolphe had given his heart, with its renewed blossom—these white hands of Mlle. Mimi were soon to mutilate the poet's heart with their pink nails.

Before a month was over Rodolphe began to see that he had espoused a tempest, and that his mistress had a great defect. She was a gossip among the neighbours, and passed a great part of her time among the women of the locality, with whom she speedily struck up acquaintance. The result was what Rodolphe had feared when he first noted the acquaintances made by his mistress. The opulence of some of these new friends created a world of ambition in the soul of Mimi, who hitherto had had modest tastes and had been content with the necessaries of life which Rodolphe had done his best to procure for her. Mimi began to dream of silks, and velvets, and laces, and in spite of Rodolphe's prohibitions she continued to cultivate the society of the women who united in persuading her to break with the Bohemian who could not so much as give her a hundred and fifty francs to buy a gown.

"Pretty as you are," said these counsellors, "you would easily find a better position; you have only to seek it."

And Mlle. Mimi set to work to seek it. Noticing

her frequent absences from home, for which she made lame excuses, Rodolphe found himself on the miserable path of suspicion. But from the instant he imagined he was on the track of any proof of infidelity he fiercely tied a bandage over his eyes, so that he should not see anything. However it might be, he adored Mimi. He had that jealous, fantastic, querulous, strange love which the young woman was incapable of comprehending because she had for Rodolphe only that lukewarm attachment which is the result of habit. And besides, half of her heart had been given to her first love, and the other half was still full of the remembrance of that first love.

In this way eight months passed, alternated by good times and wretched ones, and during this period Rodolphe was constantly on the point of separating himself from Mimi, who was full of all the cruelties of a woman who has no love in her. Speaking plainly, their existence had become a hell for both, but Rodolphe grew accustomed to these daily miseries, and dreaded nothing so much as to see this state of things cease, for he felt that with that there would cease for ever the youthful fevers and emotions which had revived within him. And then, all being told, it must be said that there were times when Mlle. Mimi cleverly enough made Rodolphe forget the suspicions which lacerated his heart. There were times when she would creep to his knees like a child, and in the sweetness of her blue eyes the poet found again the poetry he had lost; his youth returned to him and, thanks to her, he basked in the sunshine of love. Two or three

times in a month, in the middle of their stormy quarrels, Rodolphe and Mimi paused, as it were, by mutual consent, in the refreshing oases of love and soft caresses. Then Rodolphe would take to his breast the exquisite head and smiling face, and for hours would murmur the delightfully absurd language which passion improvises in its hours of delirium. Mimi would listen, calm at first, more astonished than moved; but at last Rodolphe's enthusiastic eloquence, now gay, now tender, now melancholy, would win her. She seemed to feel the ice of her heart melting under the contact, a contagious warmth would steal over her, and casting herself on his bosom, she would tell him with her kisses all that words had not power to speak. Dawn would surprise them thus locked in embraces, their eyes looking into each other's, their hands locked together, while their passionate lips uttered the immortal refrain—

"Which for five thousand years
Of nights the lips of lovers have murmured."

But next day the most futile pretext would bring on a quarrel, and terrified love would fly away.

At last, however, Rodolphe saw that if he was not careful Mlle. Mimi's white hands would thrust him into an abyss where he would lose his future and his youth. One minute austere reason would speak within him more loudly than love, and he convinced himself with fine reasonings based upon proofs that his mistress no longer loved him. He even went the length of telling himself that the hours of tenderness she spared him were no more than the caprices of a feeling like that which married women

feel for their husbands when they want a new gown or are afflicted with a cashmere fever. Or, their lovers being absent, the suggestive proverb comes uppermost, "When there is no white bread one must be content with brown." In short, Rodolphe was able to pardon his mistress everything except not being loved by her. He therefore took courage, and announced to Mlle. Mimi that she would have to find another lover. Mimi laughed at this, and treated it lightly. Finally, however, finding that Rodolphe stuck to his resolution and received her with perfect coolness after she had absented herself for a night and a day, she began to get a little uneasy under a firmness and resolve to which she was so unaccustomed. For two or three days, therefore, she was charming, but her lover did not retract his words, and contented himself with asking whether she had found someone.

"I have not sought," she answered.

Nevertheless she had sought, and that before Rodolphe had given her the advice to do so. In the course of a fortnight she had made two attempts. One of her women friends had aided her, and contrived to effect an introduction to a youth who had dazzled Mimi's eyes with an horizon of Indian cashmeres and splendid rosewood furniture, but in Mimi's opinion the young student who might be very strong in algebra was not a very brilliant scholar in love; and as she did not like teaching, she sent the amorous novice with his cashmeres, which were still nibbling on Thibet meadows, and his rosewood furniture, that was still in leaf in the forests of the New World, to the right-about.

The studious youth was soon replaced by a Breton gentleman, towards whom Mimi really felt some attraction, and there was no need for much seeking to become countess; but in spite of his mistress's protestations, Rodolphe got wind of the intrigue. He wanted to know his real position, and one morning, following a night on which Mimi did not return home, he went to the house where he suspected she was, and there he was able at his leisure to find ample proof of his suspicions. Her eyes sparkling with triumph, he saw Mimi leave the mansion where she had ennobled herself, leaning on the arm of her new lord and master, who evidently was as proud of his new conquest as Paris the Greek shepherd was when he carried off the fair Helen.

On seeing her lover Mimi evinced a little surprise. She went to him, and for about five minutes they talked quietly together. Then they separated, each going their several ways. The rupture had come.

Rodolphe returned home, and passed the day in putting up in packages all the things which had belonged to Mimi.

During the day following the divorce from his mistress he received visits from some of his friends and told them what had taken place. Every one congratulated him on the event, as if it were a very fortunate one.

"We will help you, oh my poet," said one of those who had been the most frequent witnesses of the wretchedness Mimi had caused Rodolphe; "we will help you to withdraw your heart from the

hands of a wicked woman. And after a little you will find yourself cured and quite ready to go running with another Mimi about the green lanes of d'Aulnay and Fontenay-aux-Roses."

Rodolphe declared that those days were over—ended in regrets and despair. He however allowed himself to be taken to the Mabille ball, where his careless attire very wretchedly represented the *Iris*, which procured him free entry of the beautiful garden with all its elegance and pleasures. There Rodolphe met new friends, with whom he fell to drinking. He told them his misfortunes in strange, extravagant terms, and for quite an hour they were full of interest and sympathy.

"Alas! alas!" said Marcel, as he listened to the torrent of irony which fell from his friend's lips, "Rodolphe is too merry, much too merry!"

"He is charming!" rejoined a young woman to whom Marcel had just offered a bouquet; "and although he is frightfully dressed, I would not mind compromising myself by dancing with him, if he would ask me."

In two seconds Rodolphe, who had heard her, was at her feet, clothing his invitation in words scented with all the musk and perfume of gallantry *à 80 degrés Richelieu*. The lady sat confounded by this language embroidered by such brilliant adjectives, which would have done credit to the polite days of the Regency, and which was enough to make the heels of his shoes blush, for he had never comported himself in such old Sèvres china fashion. The invitation was accepted.

Rodolphe was as ignorant of the merest elements

of dancing as of the rule-of-three, but he was excited to astounding audacity, and did not hesitate to break off and improvise a figure unknown to the devotees of Terpsichore. It was a figure, he said, called "the figure of regrets and sighs," and its originality attracted boundless attention. The three thousand jets of gas might well flicker and flare as if in mockery and amazement, but Rodolphe kept on, all the time overwhelming his partner with entirely unpublished handfuls of madrigals.

"Alas!" said Marcel, "it is almost incredible. Rodolphe gives me the impression of a drunken man rolling on shattered glasses."

"Meanwhile he has made conquest of a superb woman," said another, as he watched Rodolphe hurrying away with his companion.

"You are not going to say good-bye?" called Marcel after him.

Rodolphe came back to the artist and stretched out his hand—a hand that was cold and damp as a wet stone.

Rodolphe's partner was a fine Normandy girl, of exuberant nature, whose native rusticity had speedily grown refined and even aristocratic amidst Parisian luxuries and a life of idleness. She called herself something like Madame Séraphine, and at that time was mistress of a certain Rhumatisme, peer of France, who gave her fifty louis a month, which she shared with a clerk who gave her in return nothing but blows. Rodolphe had pleased her (she hoped that he would not give her anything), and she took him home to her lodging.

"Lucile," she said to her maid, "I am not at

home to anybody," and after going into her room, where she remained for a few minutes, she returned attired in an airy costume. She found Rodolphe motionless and dumb, for ever since he came in he had sunk, in spite of himself, into the gloom of silent, sad thoughts.

"You don't look at me. You don't speak to me," said Séraphine, astonished.

"Well, come, then," said Rodolphe, lifting his head. "I will look, but only in the cause of Art."

"And what a vision burst upon his sight!"

as Raoul says in the *Huguenots*.

Séraphine was magnificently handsome. Her splendid form, set off to advantage by the fashion of her garments, gleamed seductively through the half-transparent tissues. All the imperious ardour of desire awoke in Rodolphe's veins. A warm mist seemed to becloud his brain. He began to gaze at Séraphine from another point of view than the æsthetic one, and he took her beautiful hands in his. They were perfect hands, and might have been carved by the most delicate chisel of some Greek sculptor. Rodolphe felt these beautiful hands tremble in his; and less and less the art critic, he drew Séraphine towards him, her face crimsoning with the dawn of love.

"This woman is a veritable instrument of pleasure, a real Stradivarius of love, and I will gladly play upon her," thought Rodolphe, as he heard her heart beating loudly.

At this moment a violent ring at the bell was heard at the door.

"Lucile! Lucile!" cried Séraphine to the maid. "Don't open the door. Say I have not returned."

At the name of Lucile—twice uttered—Rodolphe rose.

"I will not inconvenience you in any way, madame," he said. "Besides, I must be going. It is late, and I live a long way from here. Good night."

"What! you are going?" cried Séraphine, redoubling the brilliant eloquence of her looks. "Why, why will you go? I am at liberty. You can stay."

"Impossible," replied Rodolphe. "I am expecting to-night a relative who is coming from Tierra del Fuego, and he would disinherit me if he did not find me at home to receive him. Good night, madame."

And he rushed out. The maid followed to light him. Rodolphe chanced to glance at her. She was a young, fragile, slow-paced woman; her deadly white face contrasting charmingly with the blackness of her naturally curling hair, and her blue eyes were like two faint stars.

"Ah, phantom!" exclaimed Rodolphe, shrinking before the figure that bore the name and the countenance of his mistress. "Away with you! What do you want of me?" and he rushed down the staircase.

"Madame," said the girl as she re-entered the room, "that young man is mad!"

"Say he's a fool," replied the exasperated Séraphine. "Oh!" she went on, "that will teach me to be good-natured again. If this stupid Leon had only the sense to come now."

Leon was the gentleman whose tender friendship carried a whip.

Rodolphe ran all the way home without stopping. As he mounted the stairs he found the cat, who was mewing pitifully. For two nights past he had been calling thus for the unfaithful sweetheart, an Angora Manon Lescaut, who had gone in gallant company to some neighbouring roofs. "Poor beast!" said Rodolphe, "thou too hast been deceived; thy Mimi has forsaken thee as mine has. Ah! never mind. Let us console ourselves. Ah, my poor beast, the heart of women and of cats is an abyss that man and tom-cats will never be able to sound."

As he entered the room, although the night was fearfully hot, Rodolphe seemed to feel as if a mantle of ice had fallen on his shoulders. It was the chill of solitude, of that terrible night-loneliness which nothing comes to disturb. He lighted his candle and looked round the devastated room. The cupboards and drawers stood open and empty, and from the ceiling to the floor profound melancholy filled the little chamber, which seemed to Rodolphe bigger than a desert. His feet stumbled over the parcels and packages containing the belongings of Mademoiselle Mimi, and he felt a sort of gladness to think that as yet no one had come for them, as she said in the morning would be the case.

Rodolphe, in spite of his wrestlings with himself, felt the hour of reaction was at hand, and he knew that a fearful night would expiate the absurd attempts at gaiety he had made during the evening. He hoped, however, that broken by fatigue

as he was, he would fall asleep before the awakening of the anguish which dwelt in his heart.

As he approached and parted the curtains he gazed upon the bed which had not been slept in for the last two nights, and at the two pillows placed one beside the other, on one of which lay half lost in the coverlet a little trimmed cap. Rodolphe felt as if his heart was crushed in the terrible grooves of that misery which cannot vent itself. He fell at the bed's foot, burying his face in his hands, after having given one look round, and cried—

"Oh, little Mimi, joy of my home, is it true that you are gone—that I have sent you away, and that I shall never see you again? My God! Oh, pretty brown head, that has so often rested here, will you never come and sleep here again? Oh, capricious, changeful voice, whose caressing tones maddened me with delight and whose little tempers charmed me, shall I never hear you again? Oh, white little hands, with their blue veins to which my lips were wedded; oh, white little hands, have you indeed received my last kiss?" And in his delirium of misery Rodolphe plunged his head into the pillows still fragrant with the perfumes of her hair. In the shadows of the alcove he seemed to see the phantom of the nights which he had passed with his young mistress. He seemed to hear, clear and resonant through the silence, Mimi's ripples of laughter, and was filled once again with the delightful contagious gaiety that so many a time had made him forget all the anxieties and miseries of their precarious existence.

Throughout the night he passed in review the eight months which had fled by in the society of this girl who had never perhaps loved him, but whose tender pretences and deceit had known how to restore its youth and vigour to Rodolphe's heart.

The pale dawn surprised him just when, conquered by fatigue, he had closed his eyes, reddened by the tears which he had shed during the past night. Sad and terrible vigil, such as the most sceptical and scornful among us may find in our past years!

In the morning when his friends looked in they were horrified to see how Rodolphe's face was ravaged by all the agonies which had assailed him during his vigil on Love's Mount of Olives.

"Good," said Marcel. "I was certain of it. It is his assumed gaiety of yesterday which has reacted on the heart. It must not be allowed to go on."

And in concert with his companions, he began at the expense of Mlle. Mimi a host of indiscreet revelations, each of which pierced like pine prickles into Rodolphe's heart. His friends proved to him that throughout his mistress had treated him as if he were a nothing—a ninny, at home and abroad alike; and that this girl, pale as the angel of consumption, was a network of corrupt and fierce instincts.

In turn they took up the task, the intention being that Rodolphe should be led to the point where embittered love changes to contempt; but the end was only partially attained. The despair of the poet changed to rage. He turned savagely

upon the packages which he had put up on the previous day, and after having laid on one side all the articles which his mistress had in her possession when she came to him, he kept back to himself all that he had given her during the time of their being together—that is to say, the greater part, and, above all, the toilet articles to which Mimi clung with all the fibres of coquetry, till at last she had come to be absolutely insatiable.

Mlle. Mimi arrived next day to fetch away her things. Rodolphe was in and alone. It needed all his powers of self-control to keep him from casting his arms about her neck. He received her with a mutely injured air, and Mimi retorted by such cold and pointed insults as force out the claws of the weakest and most timid. Under the disdain with which his mistress treated him so insolently, Rodolphe's indignation burst out into brutal and terrible violence; for a moment Mimi, white with terror, wondered whether she would escape from his hands alive, until, alarmed by her cries, some neighbours came and took her away from the room.

Two days after a friend of Mimi's came and asked him whether he would give up to her the things which he had kept back. "No," replied he. And he began to chat with Mimi's messenger. The woman told him that Mimi was in a wretched state of destitution and had not a roof over her head.

"And the fellow she was so infatuated with?"

"But," said Amélie, the friend in question, "the young man had no intention of taking her for his mistress. He has had one this long time, and he

troubled himself little enough about Mimi, who is upon my hands, and a great trouble to me."

"It will settle itself," said Rodolphe. "She would have it so. It is no concern of mine." And he recited a madrigal to Mlle. Amélie, and persuaded her she was the loveliest woman in the world.

Amélie related to Mimi the particulars of her visit to Rodolphe.

"What did he say? What is he doing?" asked Mimi. "Did he speak to you of me?"

"Not a word. You are already forgotten, my dear. Rodolphe has a new mistress, and he has bought her a splendid dress, for he has received a lot of money and is dressed like a prince himself. He is very agreeable. And he said charming things to me."

"We know what that means," thought Mimi.

Every day Mlle. Amélie went to see Rodolphe on one pretext or another; and try as he might, he could not help talking of Mimi.

"She is very cheerful," said the friend, "and does not appear to be particularly anxious. Moreover, she says she shall return to you when she likes without any asking, and means to do it to annoy your friends."

"Very good," said Rodolphe. "Let her come, and we shall see."

And he began to pay small attentions to Amélie, who reported all to Mimi when she returned, assuring her that Rodolphe was much taken with her. "He has kissed my hands and my neck again," she said. "Look, it is quite red! He wants to take me to the ball to-morrow."

"My dear creature," said Mimi, greatly piqued, "I see what you are driving at—you want to make me believe that Rodolphe is in love with you, and that he thinks no longer of me. But you lose your time both with him and with me."

The fact was that Rodolphe was only agreeable to Amélie in order to get her to come to him often, and then he invariably found some excuse for speaking of Mimi; but with a Machiavellism which perhaps had its object, and perceiving perfectly well that Rodolphe still loved Mimi, and that they might yet come together Amélie contrived by great adroitness to keep the two apart.

The day of the ball Amélie came in the morning to ask Rodolphe if the arrangement was to hold good.

"Yes," replied he. "I should be sorry to miss the chance of being cavalier to the most beautiful woman of modern times."

Amélie put on the coquettish air which she had assumed when she had played *soubrette* at a small suburban theatre, and promised she would be ready in the evening.

"By the way," said Rodolphe, "tell Mademoiselle Mimi that if she will be unfaithful to her lover in my favour and come some night to me, I will give her all her things again."

Amélie fulfilled Rodolphe's commission, lending the words quite another sense than the one she had divined they were to convey.

"Your Rodolphe is contemptible," she said. "His proposition is an infamous one. He wants by this trick to make you stoop to the ranks of the lowest creatures; and if you go to him, he will not

only not give you up your things, but he will hold you up as a laughing-stock to his friends. It is a conspiracy they have made among themselves."

"I shall not go," said Mimi, and when she saw Amélie preparing to dress for the ball she asked her if she was going.

"Yes," replied Amélie.

"With Rodolphe?"

"Yes. He is going to meet me this evening a dozen yards away from the house."

"I hope you will enjoy yourself," said Mimi, and towards the hour of the rendezvous she ran in great haste to Mlle. Amélie's own special admirer, and informed him that she was about to play off a little treachery against him.

The gentleman, jealous as a tiger and brutal as a cudgel, arrived at Mlle. Amélie's rooms and informed her that it would be an excellent notion if she came that night with him.

At eight o'clock Mimi ran to the place where Rodolphe was to meet Amélie. She saw her lover, who was walking like a man waiting for someone. She passed him twice without daring to address him. Rodolphe was very carefully and well dressed that evening, and the violent agitation to which he had recently been the prey had added expression to his features. Mimi was greatly moved. At last she decided to speak to him. Rodolphe met her without showing any signs of anger, and inquired after her health; after that he listened to the reason which had brought her to him; all told in a soft voice and in accents of sadness striving for self-control.

"I bring you bad news," she said. "Mademoiselle

Amélie cannot go with you to the ball. Her lover wants her."

"I will go to the ball alone, then."

At this point Mlle. Mimi feigned to trip, and held on for support by Rodolphe's shoulder. He took her by the arm, and offered to conduct her home.

"No," said Mimi; "I live with Amélie, and as her lover is with her, I cannot go in again till he is gone."

"Listen," said the poet then, "I made you a proposal through Mademoiselle Amélie. Has she delivered it?"

"Yes," said Mimi, "but in terms in which, after what has happened, I could not place any trust. No, Rodolphe, I did not believe that in spite of all you have to reproach me with, you could think me so poor-spirited as to accept such a bargain."

"You did not understand, or else my message was misrepresented. But what is said, is said," added Rodolphe. "It is nine o'clock. You have three hours to consider. My key will be hanging by my door till midnight. Good night or au revoir."

"Good-bye, then," said Mimi in trembling tones, and they parted. Rodolphe returned home and flung himself all dressed as he was on his bed. At half-past eleven Mlle. Mimi entered his room.

"I come to ask your hospitality," she said. "Amélie's lover is still with her, and I cannot go in." They talked together till three in the morning—a sort of explanatory conversation, partly formal, but now and again dropping into the old familiar modes of expression. About four o'clock the candle went out. Rodolphe was about to light another.

"No," said Mimi, "it is not worth while. It is time to sleep."

And five minutes later her pretty brown head rested on the pillow, and in tender accents she invited Rodolphe's lips to press the little blue-veined hands, whose alabaster pallor rivalled the whiteness of the bed drapery. Rodolphe did not light the candle.

The next morning it was Rodolphe who first rose, and pointing to the packages, said to Mimi very gently, "Those are the things belonging to you. You can take them. I keep my word."

"Oh!" said Mimi, "I am very tired, you see, and I could not carry away those big parcels all at once. I would rather come back for them." And as she was dressed she took only a collarette and a pair of cuffs.

"I will take away the rest—a little at a time," she said, smiling.

"No," said Rodolphe. "Take away all, or take away nothing. This must finish."

"On the contrary, let it begin—and last for ever," said Mimi, embracing Rodolphe.

After breakfasting together, they started to go into the country. In crossing the Luxembourg, Rodolphe met a famous poet, who had always received him with charming kindness. According to usage Rodolphe made a pretence of not seeing him, but the poet did not give him time for that; he greeted him with a friendly gesture, and saluted his young companion with a gracious smile.

"Who was that gentleman?" asked Mimi.

Rodolphe answered with a name that brought a flush of delight and pride to her cheeks.

"Oh," said Rodolphe, "this meeting with a poet who sings so enchantingly of love is a good augury and will bring good luck to our reconciliation."

"I love you. There," said Mimi, squeezing her lover's hand, although they were in the middle of the crowded ways.

"Alas!" meditated Rodolphe, "which is better—to let one's self be deceived by having believed, or never to believe for fear of being always deceived?"

XV

DONEC GRATUS . . .

IT has been related how the painter Marcel made the acquaintance of Mlle. Musette. United one day by Caprice, who is the mayor of their district, they had imagined that, after the ordinary course of such things, their intimacy could end upon the basis of the same law. But one evening, after a violent quarrel, which decided them to break off instantly and for ever, they found that their hands, meeting in final adieu, would not separate. Fancy, almost without their being conscious of it, had become love. They both admitted it half-laughingly.

"This," said Marcel, "is a very serious matter. How the deuce have we done it?"

"Oh," replied Musette, "we are dunderheads! We have not taken proper precaution."

"What is up!" inquired Rodolphe, whose rooms now neighboured Marcel's, as he chanced to look in.

"This has happened," said Marcel, pointing to Musette, "she and I have just made a grand discovery. We are in love with each other. It must have happened while we were asleep."

"Oh! Ah! Asleep. No, I don't think so," said Rodolphe. "But where is the proof that you do love each other? Perhaps you exaggerate the danger."

"Good heavens! No," replied Marcel. "We cannot endure one another."

"And we cannot leave each other," added Musette.

"Then, my children, the matter is clear. Wanting to play to the very end, you have both lost. It is simply my story over again with Mimi. It is a subject for endless discussion. By this system it is that the perpetuity of marriage has become an institution. Unite a yes with a no, and you have a Philemon and Baucis household; your home will be a pendant to mine, and if Schaunard and Phémie are coming here to live, as they threaten, our trio of establishments will form a very agreeable whole."

At this moment Gustave Colline entered. He was informed of the accident which had befallen Musette and Marcel.

"Well, philosopher," said Marcel, "what do you think of it?"

Colline smoothed the nap of the hat which was as good as a roof to him, and murmured, "I was sure of it; love is a game of chance in which there is plenty of excitement. It is not good for man to be alone."

In the evening when Rodolphe came home, he said to Mimi, "There is news; Musette is madly in love with Marcel, and won't leave him."

"Poor girl!" replied Mimi, "and she had such a good appetite."

"And on his side Marcel is smitten with Musette. He adores her 'thirty-six carat,' as that Colline calls it."

"Poor fellow!" said Mimi, "and so jealous as he is."

"Quite true," said Rodolphe. "He and I are pupils of Othello."

A little while after Schaunard and Phémie set up their domesticities close by. From that day forward the other lodgers of the house slept upon such a volcano that at the end of their term they sent the landlord notice to quit.

Few days passed, in fact, on which a storm did not burst in one or other of the establishments. Now it was Mimi and Rodolphe, who, having exhausted their speaking powers, explained the rest by any household projectiles chancing to be at hand. Most frequently it was Schaunard, who emphasised his remarks to the melancholy Phémie with the end of a cane. As for Marcel and Musette, their discussions were conducted in the silence of closed doors; they, at all events, took the precaution of shutting their doors and windows.

If by chance peace did reign in the several establishments, the other lodgers of the place did not find their sufferings lessened by the transient concord. The indiscretions of the partition walls permitted all the secrets of the Bohemian household management to penetrate them, initiating them in spite of themselves into its mysteries; and more than one neighbour preferred a *casus belli* to ratifications of treaties of peace.

It was, in fact, a singular existence which the Bohemians led for the next six months. The most loyal fraternity was observed by them. All was in common, and scrupulously shared, good or ill as fortune might send.

Donec Gratus . . .

There were certain days of magnificence, upon which none of them went down into the street without gloves; red-letter occasions, when they dined all day. There were other times when they went almost without boots or shoes, Lenten days these, when after going breakfastless, they did not dine together, or, at all events, only succeeded by economical combinations in creating one of those repasts at which plates and dishes, as Mimi said, "took a holiday."

But strange to say that in this society, which included, at all events, three young and pretty women, no discord ever broke out among the men. They bent often to the most futile caprices of their mistresses, but not one of them would have hesitated between the girl and the friend.

Love is the child of spontaneity. It is an improvisation. Friendship, on the contrary, is built up so to speak of a sentiment that moves with circumspection; it is the egoism of the mind, while love is the egoism of the heart.

The Bohemians had known one another for six years. This long period, passed in daily intimacy without altering the strongly defined individuality of each one of them, had bound them in an accordance of ideas and a unity which they would have vainly sought elsewhere. They had their own manners and customs and modes of expression, of which strangers would not have known where to find the key. Those who did not properly know them called their free-going ways cynicism. It was, in fact, simply frankness. Their spirits, restive against all constraint, hated the false and held the common-

place in contempt. Accused of exaggerated vanities, they retorted by proudly proclaiming the programme of their ambition, and having the consciousness of their worth, they did not abuse it.

During the many years that they had walked together in the same paths they had often of necessity been placed in rivalry; but they had never broken their ties, and had passed over without heeding personal questions of self-respect every time that attempts had been made to disunite them. They, moreover, estimated exactly their own individual value; and pride, which is the antidote of envy, protected them from all petty professional jealousies.

After six months, however, of this life in common, an epidemic of divorce suddenly broke out among them. Schaunard inaugurated proceedings. One day he happened to notice that Phémie Teinturière had one knee better made than the other, and as in the matter of sculpture he was an austere purist, he dismissed Phémie, making her a present of the cane with which he had been accustomed to emphasise his frequent observations, and then he went to live with a relative who offered him a home gratis.

A fortnight after, Mimi left Rodolphe to take her place in the carriage of young Viscount Paul, formerly Carolus Barbemuche's pupil, who had promised her gowns as brilliant as the sun.

After Mimi it was Musette who cleared off and rejoined with great state the aristocratic ranks of the gallant Society which she had quitted to follow Marcel.

This separation took place without quarrel, or dis-

turbance, or premeditation. Born of a caprice which grew into love, another caprice severed the connection.

One evening in carnival time, at the opera masked ball, whither she had gone with Marcel, Musette had for vis-à-vis a young man who had formerly paid her attentions. They recognised each other, and while dancing exchanged a few words together. Without perhaps intending it, while she was telling the young man of her present way of life, she allowed some regrets for the old life to pass her lips. When the quadrille finished, Musette made a mistake, and instead of giving her hand to Marcel her partner, she took the hand of her vis-à-vis, who led her away into the crowd and disappeared.

Marcel, not a little uneasy, sought for her. After about an hour he found her leaning on the young man's arm; she was leaving the opera coffee-room singing snatches of songs. At sight of Marcel, who was standing in a corner with crossed arms, she waved him adieu, calling, "I am coming back."

"That is to say, 'Don't wait for me,'" translated Marcel. He was jealous, but he was logical, and knew Musette, therefore he did not wait for her; he returned home with his heart big and an empty stomach. He sought in the cupboard for possible leavings—for a supper. He found a morsel of granite-like bread and the skeleton of a sour herring.

"I can't contend against truffles," thought he. "At all events, Musette will have had supper." And after passing the corner of his handkerchief

across his eyes, under pretence of wiping his mouth, he went to bed.

Two days later Musette awoke in a rose-coloured boudoir, a blue brougham waited at her door, and all the fairies in the world—requisitioned in her service—brought their marvels to her feet. Musette was charming, and her early youth seemed to renew itself in this setting of elegancies. So she recommenced the old life, attended all the fêtes, and regained her celebrity. She was talked of everywhere—in the byways of the Exchange and even in the parliamentary buffets. As for her new lover, Monsieur Alexis, he was an agreeable young man. Often he complained to Musette that she seemed a little careless and indifferent when he spoke to her of his love. Then Musette would gaze at him smilingly, pat his hands, and say—

"What is it you want, dearest? I stopped six months with a man who fed me on salad and soup, without butter, who dressed me in a print gown, and took me to the Odéon a great deal because he was not rich. As love costs nothing, and I was madly in love with this creature, we wasted a considerable amount of love, and there are only a few crumbs of it left. Pick them up. I don't hinder you. For the rest, I have not deceived you; and if ribbons were not so dear I should still be with my painter. As to my heart, since a corset of eighty francs covers it, I cannot hear it beat very loudly, and I am almost afraid I must have left it in one of Marcel's drawers."

The disappearance of the three Bohemian households was the occasion of a fête in the house which

had contained them. In token of his satisfaction the landlord gave a grand dinner and the lodgers illuminated their windows.

Rodolphe and Marcel now lived together. Each of them had selected a new divinity, whose names they were not even precisely certain of. Sometimes they talked of Mimi or of Musette, and it would suffice as a theme for the whole evening. They would recall their memories of the old life, and Musette's songs and Mimi's songs, and the sleepless nights, and the idle mornings, and the dream-dinners.

One after the other they would recall, during these chats, those memories of the hours that had fled for ever, and they would usually end up by saying that, after all, they were glad to be together alone again with their feet on the fender, stirring the winter logs, smoking their pipes, and to have each of them a pretext for gossiping and saying aloud to the other what each only said in a whisper to himself when he was alone—that they had greatly loved those creatures who had left them, taking with them the shreds of their youth, and it might be that they loved them still.

One evening, as he was crossing the boulevard, Marcel saw a young woman a little distance off, who, as she descended from a cab, displayed an ankle that was the perfection of form and grace. The driver himself was fascinated with his fare.

"Good heavens!" said Marcel, "that is a fine ankle. I should like to offer my arm. Let me see—how can I manage it? That's my business: it seems quite strange."

"Excuse me, madame," he said, approaching the unknown, whose face he had not as yet been able to catch a glimpse of, "you have not by chance found my handkerchief?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young lady, "here it is." And she put into Marcel's hand a handkerchief she held.

The artist staggered with astonishment.

But suddenly a burst of laughter right in his face restored him to himself, for in the joyous fanfare he recognised the tones of his old love.

It was Musette.

"Ah!" cried she, "Monsieur Marcel is looking for adventures. What do you think of this one—eh? It doesn't lack drollery."

"I find it supportable," said Marcel.

"What are you doing so late in this part of the world?" asked Musette.

"I am going into this tomb," replied the artist, pointing to a little theatre of which he had the entrée.

"For the love of Art?"

"No, for love of Laure. Now," said Marcel to himself, "that is a pretty little play upon words of double meaning. I will sell it to Colline. He is making a collection of them."

"Who is Laure?" asked Musette, whose looks sparkled notes of interrogation.

Marcel continued his disagreeable pleasantries.

"I am pursuing a chimera who plays ingénues in this obscure place," and with a wave of his hand he indicated a dancer's dress.

"You are very lively this evening," said Musette.

"And you very curious," said Marcel.

"Speak lower. Everybody will hear us, and they will take us for lovers quarrelling."

"It wouldn't be the first time such a thing had happened to us," said Marcel.

Musette caught provocation in this phrase, and replied quickly—

"And perhaps it won't be the last—eh?"

The meaning was obvious; it hissed like a bullet into Marcel's ear.

"Splendours of heaven!" said he, gazing up at the stars, "you are witnesses that it is not I who struck the first blow. My cuirass—quick!"

The firing had begun.

There was nothing more to be done than to find a convenient point of union for these two imaginations which had awakened so quickly.

As they went along Musette looked at Marcel, and Marcel looked at Musette. They did not speak, but their eyes—those ambassadors of the heart—often met. At the end of a quarter of an hour of diplomacy this congress of looks had tacitly arranged the matter. It only remained to ratify it.

The interrupted conversation was renewed.

"Frankly," said Musette to Marcel, "where were you going just now?"

"I have told you. I was going to Laure."

"Is she pretty?"

"Her mouth is a nest of smiles."

"I understand," said Musette.

"But yourself," said Marcel, "whence come you on the wings of this cab?"

"I came from taking Alexis to the railway. He is going on a tour with his family."

"What sort of a fellow is Alexis?"

In her turn Musette drew a taking portrait of her new lover. All the way they went Marcel and Musette continued in the open street to play this comedy of going back to the old love.

In the same naïve key, now railing, now tender, they recited once more, strophe by strophe, the immortal ode in which Horace and Lydia extol so gracefully the delights of their renewed loves, and finish by adding a postscript to their former loves. As it happened, they reached the corner of the street just as a strong patrol tramped round it.

Musette manufactured a little terrified attitude, and clinging to Marcel's arm, she cried—

"Oh, good heavens! Look! The troops are coming! There is going to be another revolution. We must save ourselves. I am terribly frightened. Take me back!"

"But where are we going?" asked Marcel.

"Home with me," said Musette. "You will see how pretty it is. I will give you some supper, and we will talk politics."

"No," said Marcel, thinking of Monsieur Alexis, "I will not go to your house, in spite of supper. I don't like drinking my wine out of other people's glasses."

Musette stood silent under this refusal. Then through the mists of memory she saw the poor artist's mean dwelling, for Marcel had not become a millionaire. And she had an idea, and profiting by the march past of another patrol, she manifested renewed terror.

"They are going to fight!" she cried. "I can

never go back. Marcel, dear friend, take me to a friend of mine who *should* be living near your house."

As they crossed the Pont Neuf Musette burst out into a shout of laughter.

"What is it?" asked Marcel.

"Nothing," said Musette. "I remember now that my friend has gone away from this part. She lives in the Batignolles quarter."

Seeing Marcel and Musette arrive arm in arm caused Rodolphe no astonishment. "Half-buried loves always end thus," he said.

XVI

"THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA"

FOR five or six years Marcel had worked at his famous picture, which he said represented "The Passage of the Red Sea," and for five or six years this masterpiece of colouring had been persistently rejected by the judges. It had been taken so often to and fro between the artist's studio and the Musée that if it had been placed on wheels it would have rolled of itself to the Louvre. Marcel, who had altered detail and touched up the canvas a hundred times from top to bottom, ascribed the ostracism which annually banished him from the salons to personal animosity on the part of the members of the council; and at idle moments had composed a little dictionary of his injuries in honour of these Cerberuses of the Institute, illustrated with stingingly ferocious pictures. This work, which became generally celebrated, was known in all the studios of the Beaux Arts, and had attained to the popularity which attaches to the immortal complaint of Jean Bélin, painter in ordinary to the Grand Sultan of the Turks. All the students of the brush in Paris had scraps of it stored in their memory.

For a long time Marcel was not discouraged by these irritating refusals met with at each exhibition;

he was comfortably convinced in his own opinion that his picture was, in the degree of its smaller proportions, the pendant long waited for by "The Marriage of Cana," that gigantic masterpiece whose brilliant splendour the dust of three centuries has been unable to dim. Every year, therefore, before the opening of the Salon, Marcel submitted his picture to the examination of the committee. Only, in order to nonplus them and to try and make them trip in their prejudiced exclusion of "The Passage of the Red Sea," Marcel, without altering any important part of the general composition, modified some detail of it and changed its title.

Thus one year it appeared before the jury under the name of "Crossing the Rubicon," but Pharaoh, poorly disguised under Cæsar's mantle, was recognised, and repulsed with all due honours.

The following year Marcel threw a coating of white on the surfaces of his canvas to simulate snow, put a fir tree in the corner, and clothing an Egyptian in the uniform of the Imperial Guard, christened his picture "The Passage of the Bérésina."

The jury, having now rubbed their spectacles upon the cuffs of their olive-green coats, were not duped by this fresh device. They perfectly well recognised the obstinate canvas, mainly by a huge brute of a multi-coloured horse which stood rearing high on his hind legs in the middle of a wave of the Red Sea. The trappings of this animal had afforded Marcel an opportunity for all his skill in colouring, and in his own phrasing he called the picture a synopsis of fine tones, because with its play of light and shade it

offered endless combinations of colour. But once again, insensible to these details, the jury could not find black balls enough to refuse "The Passage of the Bérésina."

"Very good," said Marcel, "I will wait. Next year I will send it again under the title of 'The Passage of the Panoramas.'"

"They will be trapped, trapped, trapped, trapped!" chanted the musician Schaunard to a new air of his own composition, an air as terrible and deafening as a gamut of thunder peals, so that it was dreaded by all the neighbouring pianos.

"How can they refuse that without all the vermilion of the Red Sea mounting to their faces and covering them with shame?" murmured Marcel, contemplating his picture. "When one thinks, there is a hundred crowns' worth of colour in it, and a million of genius, without reckoning my glorious youth, which has become as worn as my hat over it—a serious work, opening up new horizons to the science of colour! But they haven't had the last of it. To my latest breath I will go on sending that picture! I want to engrave it on their memory."

"That is the surest manner not to engrave it," said Gustave Colline, plaintively adding to himself, "That is a good *mot,* a very good one. I will repeat it in the clubs."

Marcel continued his objurgations, which Schaunard continued to set to music.

"Ah! they won't accept me," said Marcel. "Government pays them, houses them, gives them decorations, with the express object, one might say,

of refusing me once a year—the first of March, that is—a canvas in a hundred, mounted in a key-pattern frame. I distinctly see their intention; I see it clearly. They would like me to break my brushes. They hope, perhaps, in refusing my 'Red Sea' that it will drive me to throw myself out of the window in despair. But they are very ignorant of the human heart if they count on snuffing me out in that vulgar fashion. I shall not wait any longer, however, for the Salon season to come round. From this day forward my work shall become a Damocles' sword perpetually hanging over their heads. Every week I will send it to each of them—to their homes, into the bosom of their families, straight to the heart of their private life. It shall trouble their domestic joys. They shall find their wine like vinegar, their meat scorched, their wives ill-tempered. They shall very soon go mad, and be put in strait-waistcoats for the meetings of the Institute. The idea of that pleases me immensely."

Some days later, and when Marcel had already forgotten his vengeful designs against his oppressors, he received a visit from old Médecis. This was a name given by the Bohemians to a Jew called Solomon, who was well known at that time to the whole circle of Bohemian artists and literary men, and was in constant relations with them. Old Médecis dealt in all kinds of bric-à-brac. He sold complete suites of furniture from twelve francs to a thousand crowns. He bought anything and everything, and sold it at a big profit. Monsieur Proudhon's bank of exchange is a small thing in comparison with the system which was worked by

Médecis, who possessed trafficking genius to a degree which the most skilful of his tribe had never before attained. His shop, situated in the Place du Carrousel, was a fairy treasure-house, where one could find everything one wanted. All the products of nature, all the creations of art, everything that the depths of the earth or human genius can produce, Médecis did business in. His trade touched every conceivable article, absolutely every existing thing. He did business even with the ideal. He purchased ideas for the purpose of employing them himself or for selling again. Known by all the men of letters and all the artists, intimate with the palette, and familiar with productions of the pen, he was the Asmodeus of the Arts. He would barter you cigars for a magazine article, a pair of slippers for a sonnet, fresh fish for paradoxes. He would gossip for hours with journalists whose vocation it was to record the doings and follies of the world; he would procure you places in Parliament and invitations to special soirées; he gave lodging by the night, by the week, or by the month to outcast daubers who paid him in copies of the great masters made at the Louvre. There were no mysteries behind the scenes for him. He would get pieces accepted at the theatres. He would obtain your free admittance. He had in his head the addresses and names and secrets of all the celebrities even to the less known ones.

A few pages copied at random from his business books will, however, better give an idea of the universality of his business transactions than all the descriptions :—

"The Passage of the Red Sea"

"*20th March*, 184—

"Sold to M. L——, antiquary, the compass which Archimedes used during the Siege of Syracuse, 75 francs.

"Bought of M. V——, journalist, the complete works (uncut) of M. ——, member of the Academy, 10 fr.

"Sold to the same a critical article on the complete works of M. ——, member of the Academy, 30 fr.

"Sold to M. ——, member of the Academy, an article of 12 columns on his complete works, 250 fr.

"Bought of M. R——, man of letters, a critical appreciation of the complete works of M. ——, of the Academy, 10 fr., two hundredweight of coal, and 2 kilog. of coffee.

"Sold to M. —— a porcelain vase formerly belonging to Madame du Barry, 18 fr.

"Bought of little D—— her hair, 15 fr.

"Bought of M. B—— a lot of articles on the manners and the three last errors in orthography made by the Préfect of the Seine, 6 fr.; also a pair of Neapolitan shoes.

"Sold to Mademoiselle O—— a blonde wig, 120 fr.

"Bought of M. M——, historical painter, a series of comic drawings, 25 fr.

"Indicated to M. Ferdinand the hour at which Madame la baronne R. de P—— goes to Mass. Likewise let for a day the little ground floor in the Faubourg Montmartre. In all, 30 fr.

"Sold to M. Isidore his portrait as Apollo, 30 fr.

"Sold to Mademoiselle R—— a couple of lobsters and six pairs of gloves, 36 fr. (Received on account, 2 fr. 75 c.)

"At the same time obtained credit of six months of Madame ——, milliner. (Price to be arranged.)

"Procured for Madame ——, milliner, the custom of Mademoiselle R——. (Received for this three yards of velvet and six yards of lace.)

"Bought of M. R——, literary man, a bill of 120 fr. upon the newspaper——now in liquidation, 5 fr.; also two pounds of Moravian tobacco.

"Sold to M. Ferdinand two love-letters, 12 fr.

"Bought of M. J——, artist, the portrait of M. Isidore as Apollo, 6 fr.

"Sold to M. —— 75 kilog. of his work entitled "Submarine Revolutions," 15 fr.

"Let on hire to Madame la Comtesse de G—— Saxony china service, 20 fr.

"Bought of M. ——, journalist, 52 lines in his 'Courier of Paris,' 100 fr.; also a chimney-piece ornament.

"Sold to M. M. O—— and Co. 52 lines in the 'Courier of Paris' by M. —— 300 fr.; also a chimney-piece ornament.

"To Mademoiselle S. G——, let on hire a bed and a brougham for a day (nothing). (See the accounts of Mademoiselle S. G——, long ledger, folios 26 and 27.)

"Sold to M. Gustave C. a pamphlet on the Linen Industry, 50 fr.; also a rare edition of the works of Flavius Josephus.

"To Mademoiselle S. G—— sold a piece of modern furniture, 5,000 fr.

"For the same paid chemist 75 fr.

"Id.—Paid note to creamery, 3 fr. 85 c.," etc., etc., etc.

These selections will show on what an immense scale the operations of the Jew Médecis were conducted; and in spite of the shadiness of some of his widely eclectic transactions, he had never been interfered with or annoyed by anybody.

Looking in one day upon the Bohemians with the brisk, animated air which distinguished him, the Jew saw that he had come at an opportune moment. The four friends were, in fact, engaged in grave consultation under the presidency of a voracious appetite, discussing the solemn question of bread and meat. It was Sunday, the end of the month—fatal and sinister time!

The entrance, therefore, of Médecis was welcomed by a joyful chorus. They knew that the Jew set too much store by his time to spend it in mere complimentary visits, and his coming unmistakably intimated that he was prepared to do business.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the Jew. "How are you?"

"The Passage of the Red Sea"

"Colline," said Rodolphe, who was stretched on his bed in lazy enjoyment of his horizontal position, "do the hospitable; offer our guest a chair. A guest is sacred. I salute you in Abraham's name," added the poet.

Colline dragged forward a chair, which had about as much elasticity as bronze, and offered it to the Jew, saying in a hospitable voice, "You must imagine for the moment that you are Cinna, and take this chair."

As Médecis let himself drop into the chair, he was just going to complain of its hardness when he remembered that it was an exchange of his own with Colline against a profession of faith sold to a deputy who had not the gift of improvisation. As he sat down the Jew's pockets resounded metallically, and the music of it plunged the Bohemians into a sweet and agreeable reverie.

"Let us see what the tune is going to be," said Rodolphe in an undertone to Marcel; "the accompaniment seems pretty."

"Monsieur Marcel," said Médecis, "I have come simply to make your fortune. That is to say, that I come to offer you a splendid opportunity for entering into the artistic world. Art, you know very well, Monsieur Marcel, is a desert, of which glory is the oasis."

"Old Médecis," said Marcel, on tenter hooks of impatience, "in the name of fifty per cent., your venerated patron, be brief."

"Yes," said Colline, "like King Pépin. Be as short a *man as he,* O son of *Manasseh.*"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried the Bohemians, looking

for the floor to open and swallow up the philosopher.

But Colline was not engulfed this time.

"This is how it is, then," replied Médecis. "A rich amateur, who is collecting for a gallery which is to make the tour of Europe, has commissioned me to procure for him a series of remarkable pictures. I have come to offer you entry to this museum of his. In a word, I have come to buy your 'Passage of the Red Sea.'"

"*Ready* money?" said Marcel.

"Ready money," replied the Jew, tuning up the orchestra in his pockets.

"For the *red-dy* Sea?" ventured Colline.

"Without a doubt," said Rodolphe fiercely, "we shall have to gag your mouth if you will keep on talking such absurdities. Idiot, don't you hear he is talking of money? Is there nothing sacred to you, Atheist?"

Colline mounted on a stool and assumed the pose of Harpocrates, god of silence.

"Go on, Médecis," said Marcel, uncovering his picture. "I should wish to leave to you the honour of fixing the price of this priceless work."

The Jew counted out on the table fifty crowns in bright new silver money.

"And after?" said Marcel. "This being the vanguard——"

"Monsieur Marcel," said Médecis, "you know very well that my first word is always my last. I shall give no more. Reflect, fifty crowns, that is one hundred and fifty francs. It is a considerable sum."

"A poor amount," replied the artist. "In my Pharaoh's robes alone there is fifty crowns' worth of cobalt. Pay me in a decent way. Make the piles even. Make it an even sum, and I will call you Leo the Tenth, Leo X. the Second."

"I have said my last word," replied Médecis. "I won't give a sou more, but I will give you all a dinner—the wine at your own choice, and for dessert I pay in gold."

"No one speaks?" shouted Colline, striking three blows with his fist on the table. "Gone!"

"Come, then," said Marcel, "that is settled."

"I will send for the picture to-morrow," said the Jew. "Let us be going now, gentlemen. The cloth is laid."

The four friends descended the staircase singing the chorus from the *Huguenots*—"Come, let us dine."

Médecis treated the Bohemians in magnificent fashion. He offered them all sorts of things which hitherto were unknown quantities to them. From the date of that dinner lobster and Schaunard had more than the old bowing acquaintance, and he conceived a passion for the amphibian which verged on delirium.

The four friends departed from the scene of the feast drunk as labourers at vintage time, a circumstance which nearly had most disastrous consequences for Marcel, who, passing by his tailor's door at two o'clock in the morning, absolutely wanted to waken his creditor to pay him on account the hundred and fifty francs he had received, and a glimmer of reason still alive

in Colline's brain held the artist back from this suicidal act.

About a week after this festival Marcel learned in what gallery his picture had found a place. Passing down the Faubourg St. Honoré, he joined a group which was watching with immense interest and curiosity the fixing of a sign above a shop door. This sign was no other than Marcel's picture, sold by Médecis to a provision dealer, only "The Passage of the Red Sea" had undergone another modification, and bore another title. A steamboat had been introduced, and it was called "The Port of Marseilles." A most flattering ovation rose from the onlookers when they got full view of the picture. Marcel, too, was enchanted with his triumph, and murmured as he passed on, "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

XVII

THE TOILETTE OF THE GRACES

MADEMOISELLE MIMI, whose custom it was to sleep till about midday, woke one morning on the stroke of ten and was much astonished at not finding Rodolphe beside her, nor even in the room. On the previous evening before she fell asleep she had seen him settle himself at his desk in order to spend the night upon a special piece of literary work for which he had received a commission. It had peculiar interest for Mimi, inasmuch as the poet had promised her a certain splendid piece of stuff for a gown which she had seen in the windows of "The Two Monkeys," a draper's shop famous for the novelties displayed in its windows, in front of which Mimi spent many a devout moment. Since therefore the work in question had begun, Mimi had watched its progress with great anxiety. She was constantly coming up beside Rodolphe as he wrote, and, laying her head on his shoulder, she would say in grave tones—

"And my gown—how is it getting on?"

"It has one sleeve already. Be calm," would be Rodolphe's answer.

One night, having heard Rodolphe snap his fingers, which was a way he had when he was pleased with his labours, Mimi sat up briskly in bed,

and cried as she put her brown head through the curtains—

"Is my dress done?"

"See," said Rodolphe, showing her four huge sheets of paper covered with closely written lines, "I have finished the bodice."

"How delightful!" cried Mimi. "There is nothing left now but the skirt. How many pages like that will it take to make the skirt?"

"That is according to detail. But you are not big. A dozen pages with fifty lines of thirty-three letters can make a respectable skirt, I think."

"I am not big, it is true," said Mimi in serious tones, "but it will not do to skimp the material; gowns are worn very full now, and I want close gathers, so that it will make plenty of *frou-frou*."

"All right," gravely said Rodolphe. "I will put ten letters more in a line, and that will secure the *frou-frou*."

And Mimi slept in peace.

As she had committed the imprudence of talking with her friends Musette and Phémie about the grand gown Rodolphe had on the way for her, the two had not failed to inform Marcel and Schaunard of their friend's generosity to his sweetheart, and the communication had been followed by incitements of no equivocal kind to follow the poet's example.

"That is to say," added Musette, giving a tug at Marcel's moustache, "that if things go on a week longer in this fashion, I shall be obliged to borrow a pair of trousers to go out in."

"There are twelve francs owing to me from a safe source, and if I get it I will dedicate it to the purchase of a vine leaf *à la mode*."

"And I," said Phémie, "my dressing-gown is falling to pieces."

Schaunard drew three sous from his pocket and gave them to his sweetheart, saying—

"There is something to buy needles and thread with. Mend your dressing-gown. You will find it at once instructive and amusing. *Utile dulci*."

Nevertheless, in a very secret cabinet council Marcel and Schaunard arranged with Rodolphe that each of them should satisfy these requirements of their sweethearts.

"These poor girls!" Rodolphe said. "Trifles please them, and they ought to have the trifles. For some time now the fine arts and literature have been going really strong with us, we are making almost as much as the dealers."

"It is quite true that I can't complain," put in Marcel. "The fine arts are flourishing splendidly with me; one might imagine the days of Leo X. come again."

"Yet," said Rodolphe, "Musette tells me that you go out early and that you never get home again till eight o'clock at night. Are you really busy?"

"My dear fellow, yes—on a splendid thing Médicis has obtained for me. I am doing portraits at the Ave Maria Barracks. Eighteen grenadiers who want their portraits taken—one with the other, six francs apiece, the likeness guaranteed for a year, as watches are. I hope

to get the whole regiment. I have an idea, too, of rigging out Musette when Médicis has paid me, for it is with him I have the contract—not with the grenadiers themselves."

"As for me," carelessly said Schaunard, "although it is not generally known, I have two hundred francs sleeping."

"Heavens above! Wake them up——" began Rodolphe.

"In two or three days I shall lay hands on it," continued Schaunard. "When I draw it I do not conceal from you that I intend to give free course to some of my inclinations. At the old clothes dealer's down the street there is a nankeen suit and a hunting-horn which have stared me in the face this long time, and I mean to make them mine."

"But," demanded Marcel and Rodolphe, "from what source do you draw this huge capital?"

"Listen, gentlemen," said Schaunard, assuming an air of great solemnity and seating himself between his two friends, "we cannot conceal from ourselves that before becoming members of the Institute and taxpayers we have not a little rye-bread to eat, and daily bread is hard to knead. Besides, we are not alone now. Seeing that Heaven has given us sensibilities, each one of us has selected a partner, with whom he shares his lot——"

"Adorned with a herring," interrupted Marcel.

"Now," continued Schaunard, "while living with the strictest economy, when one possesses nothing, it is difficult to put by, especially if one has an appetite bigger than one's plate."

"What are you driving at?" demanded Rodolphe.

"At this," continued Schaunard, "that taking actual facts into consideration, we should all be wrong to give ourselves airs when—even outside the limits of our art—the opportunity presents itself of putting a figure before the zero which at present is the basis of our social position."

"Very well," said Marcel. "And which of us can you accuse of giving himself airs? Great painter as I shall one day be, have I not consented to devote my brush to a pictorial reproduction of French warriors who pay me with their pocket-money? It appears to me that I am not afraid of descending the ladder of my future greatness."

"And I," said Rodolphe, "are you aware that for the last fortnight I have been composing a didactic poem, medico-surgical-dental, for a celebrated dentist, who subsidises my inspiration at the rate of fifteen sous the dozen Alexandrines, a little higher price than oysters fetch? Yet I do not blush at it. Sooner than see my muse idle I would make her put the whole Paris Directory into metrical form. When one has a lyre—devil take it—is it not for use? And Mimi is always wanting new boots."

"Then," said Schaunard, "you will enter into the spirit of my following the source whence the Pactolus issues, whose influx I am expecting."

This is the history of Schaunard's two hundred francs. About a fortnight earlier he had gone into a music publisher's who had promised to find for him among his customers music and harmony lessons.

"Well, really now," said the publisher as he had entered, "you come just in the nick of time! Someone has been here to-day asking me for a pianist. He is an Englishman. I think he would pay well. Are you really expert?"

Schaunard thought that modesty would do him harm in the publisher's estimation. For a musician, and above all a pianist, to be modest is such a great rarity. Schaunard therefore replied, with any amount of confidence—

"Am I first-class? If only I had now a delicate lung, long hair and a black coat, I should be as celebrated as the sun, and instead of asking me eight hundred francs as my share for printing 'The Death of the Young Girl,' you would offer me three thousand on a silver salver. It is certain enough," continued the artist, "that my ten fingers having had ten years of hard labour on the five octaves, I can manipulate the sharps and flats very thoroughly."

The person to whom Schaunard was directed to apply was an Englishman named Mr. Birn. The musician, when he called, was first received by a blue man-servant, who passed him on to a green one, who again handed him on to one in black. This individual ushered him into a drawing-room, where he found himself in the presence of a Britisher who was striking a splenetic attitude suggestive of Hamlet meditating on the littleness of humanity. Schaunard was about to explain the occasion of his coming when a storm of piercing shrieks was heard, and drowned his utterance. This frightful noise, which almost broke the drum of his ears, was perpetrated by a paroquet who

was chained to a perch on the balcony of the floor beneath.

"Oh, the beast! the beast! the beast!" growled the Englishman, starting up in his armchair. "It will be the death of me."

At the same moment the bird commenced to deliver its répertoire, which was extraordinarily long, and Schaunard stood astounded when he heard the creature, encouraged by a feminine voice, begin to declaim the opening verses of the speech of Théramène with the intonation of the Conservatoire.

This paroquet was the pet of a famous actress, and lived in her boudoir. She was one of the women who—one knows not why or wherefore—are priced at an absurd figure in the lists of gallantry, and whose names are inscribed on the menus of wealthy supper-givers, where they are served up as living dessert.

In these days it is a mark of distinction for a Christian to be seen with one of these pagan women, who have nothing of the antique about them but the day of their birth. When they are handsome, it is perhaps no great matter; the most one risks is the chance of having to sleep on straw for putting them to sleep on rosewood. But when their beauty is bought by the ounce at the perfumer's, and three drops of water on a handkerchief can destroy it, when their wit is enshrined in Vaudeville couplets, and their talent is held in a *claqueur's* hand, one finds it difficult to comprehend how persons of distinction having something of a name, common sense, and any knowledge of the world, can allow

themselves to yield to such banality as exalting and humouring the caprices of creatures of whom valets would not make sweethearts.

The actress in question was one of these beauties of the moment. She was called Dolores, and said she was a Spaniard, though she was born in the Parisian Andalusia known as the Rue Coquenard. Although it was not ten minutes' walk from the Rue Coquenard to the Rue de Provence, she had not taken it for eight years. Her prosperity had begun at the same time as her personal falling off. Thus on the day of her first false tooth she had a horse, and two horses when a second tooth was in requisition. In fact, she lived in great style. Her apartments were palatial. She figured at Longchamps and gave balls at which all Paris was present—the Paris of these ladies. That is to say, the band of idle courtesans, of all that was scandalous and frivolous; the players of lansquenet and of absurdities; the do-nothings with brain or hand, killers of their own time and of that of others; scribblers who pose as men of letters, airing the feathers nature has clothed them in; the bravos of debauch, shady gentlemen, titled individuals of mysterious orders, all the habitués of Bohemia, come whence no one knows and returning thither; all the noted and unnoted, all the daughters of Eve who once sold the maternal fruit in baskets, and who now sell it in boudoirs; all the corrupt race from the swaddling clothes to the winding-sheet, which is to be seen at first nights with Golconda on its forehead and Thibet on its shoulders, and for whom the first spring violets bloom and the first loves of youth.

The Toilette of the Graces

All the world that the papers call Paris frequented the house of Mlle. Dolores, the mistress of the paroquet in question.

This bird, whose oratorical gifts had rendered it celebrated far and near, had become the terror of the nearer neighbours. From its perch in the balcony it kept up its interminable chatter from morning till night. Some journalists of his mistress's acquaintance had taught him certain parliamentary forms of expression. The creature waxed extremely eloquent on the question of sugar. He knew by heart the actress's répertoire and declaimed it in such a manner that he might have been her understudy in the event of her indisposition. Moreover, as she was polyglot in sentiment, and received visits from every corner of the world, the paroquet spoke all languages and indulged in idiomatic blasphemies which would have brought blushes to the very cheeks of the sailors who had conducted the education of *Vert-vert* to such a point of completeness. The society of this bird, who could be instructive and agreeable for the space of some ten minutes, became a veritable purgatory when it was prolonged.

The neighbours had frequently complained, but the actress had insolently ignored or put their complaints to silence. Two or three householders, worthy fathers of families, indignant and scandalised at the reference to loose living indulged in by the paroquet, had given notice to quit. But the actress knew the landlord's weak point.

The Englishman upon whom Schaunard was calling had been patient for three months. One

day, concealing his wrath, which was now at bursting point, under a magnificent uniform which he had worn when presented to Queen Victoria at a levée at Windsor, he made a call on Mlle. Dolores.

On seeing him enter she thought at first that it was Hoffmann in his costume of Lord Spleen, and wishing to be civil to one of the profession, she invited him to remain to breakfast. The Englishman gravely replied in the "French tongue in twenty-five lessons," in which a Spanish refugee had instructed him.

"I will accept your invitation on condition that we eat this bird—disagreeable," and he pointed to the cage of the paroquet, who having already scented out a foreigner from the British Isles, saluted him by screaming out, "God save the Queen!"

Dolores thought that her neighbour had come to insult her, and was disposed to be angry, when he added—

"As I am very rich, I can put a price on the beast?"

Dolores replied that she would stick to her bird, and had no intention of allowing it to pass into other hands.

"Oh, I don't want it to pass into my hands," replied the Englishman, "I want it under my feet," and he displayed the heel of his boot.

Dolores trembled with indignation, and was about to give vent to it, when she perceived on the visitor's finger a ring set with a diamond worth perhaps a couple of thousand francs or more. The discovery acted like a douche of cold water on the flames of her anger. She reflected that it might be

imprudent to be annoyed with a man who had such an amount on his little finger.

"Well, monsieur," she said, "since poor Coco is troublesome to you, I will put him elsewhere, in some place where you cannot hear him."

The Englishman made a gesture of satisfaction. "I should, however," he added, again showing his boot, "have much preferred——"

"Do not be afraid," said Dolores, "in the place where I shall put him, it will be impossible for him to annoy milord——"

"Oh, I am not a milord. I am simply esquire."

But just at the very moment that Mr. Birn was about to retire, after saluting the lady with a very modest bow, Dolores, who never neglected her own interests, took a little packet from a side-table, and said to the Englishman—

"Monsieur, they are giving to-night at the theatre a performance for my benefit, and I am going to play in three pieces. Will you allow me to offer you some box-tickets? The price of places has been only a little raised," and she put ten tickets into her visitor's hands.

"After my showing myself so ready to be agreeable to him," thought she, "if he has been decently brought up it will be impossible for him to refuse me, and if he sees me play in my rose pink costume, who knows? Between neighbours! The diamond he has on his finger may be the vanguard of a million. Gracious! He is very ugly, he is very gloomy, but it may afford me the opportunity of going to London without being sea-sick."

The Englishman, after taking the tickets, made

her explain their use to him once more. Then he asked the price of them.

"The boxes are sixty francs. There are ten. But there is no need to pay now," added Dolores, seeing the Englishman feeling for his purse. "I hope that as my neighbour you will sometimes give me the pleasure of a little visit from you."

"I don't like putting off things," said Mr. Birn, who had now taken out a note of a thousand francs, which he laid on the table, slipping the theatre tickets into his pocket.

"I will give you the change," said Dolores, opening a little bureau in which she kept money.

"Oh, no," said the Englishman, that will do for a *pourboire*," and he went out leaving Dolores confounded by the observation.

"*Pourboire!*" she cried, when she found herself alone. "What a boor! I will send him back his money."

But her neighbour's gross vulgarity had only irritated the epidermis of her vanity. She grew calmer under the reflection that a surplus of twenty louis made, after all, a nice little sum, for she had in her time put up with a good many cheap impertinences.

"Ah, bah!" she said, "one mustn't be so proud. No one saw, and it is washing-bill day. And, besides, this Englishman makes such a hash of French that it is quite likely, after all, it was some compliment he intended making me"; and Dolores pocketed her louis with a light heart.

But at night after the play she returned home furious. Mr. Birn had not used the tickets and the ten seats had remained vacant. Moreover, on going

on the stage, the unfortunate *bénéficiaire* read the delight in the faces of her "friends" of the green-room at seeing the auditorium so poorly occupied.

She even heard one of them remark to another as she pointed to the empty places—

"Poor Dolores! There's hardly anyone in the place. The orchestra stalls are empty. Her name on the posters has frightened everybody away!"

"What an idea to raise the price of the seats!"

"A fine benefit! What do you bet the receipts won't fill a child's money-box or the bottom of a stocking?"

"Ah! there is her famous crimson velvet costume."

"She looks like a bundle of lobsters!"

"What did you make by your last benefit?" asked one of the actresses of her companion.

"Heaps, my dear! The stalls went at a louis, but I did not touch more than six francs. My dress-maker took the rest. If I was not afraid of being frozen, I should go to St. Petersburg."

"What! not thirty years old yet, and you want to conquer your Russia?"

"Well, what then?" said the other, adding, "And you, when is your benefit?"

"In a fortnight. I have already sold a thousand crowns' worth of tickets, without counting my Saint Cyriens."

"Look, all the orchestra is going out!"

"Yes, Dolores is going to sing."

And Dolores, red as her raiment, commenced her couplets in vinegar-sour tones. As she finished two bouquets fell at her feet, thrown by her two

actress friends, who came to the front of their private boxes, crying—

"Bravo, Dolores!"

Her fury may be imagined, and though it was the middle of the night when she returned home, she opened the window and wakened Coco, who wakened the worthy Mr. Birn slumbering in the security of her given promise. From that day forth war was declared between the actress and the Englishman, war to the knife and unceasing, in which the adversaries were remorseless. It improved the paroquet's education: he grew thoroughly well grounded in the tongue of Albion and screeched insults at his neighbour in his most piercing falsetto. It became intolerable. Dolores herself suffered, but she hoped that one day or other Mr. Birn would give notice to quit. It was thus she looked for her revenge. The Englishman, on his side, invented all sorts of ways to avenge himself. He first of all instituted a school for drum practice, but the police interfered in this. Mr. Birn's ingenuity next arranged pistol-shot practice, and his servants grew very expert at it; but again the police objected, placing before him the article of municipal law which forbade the use of firearms in private houses. Mr. Birn gave up firing, but a few days later Mlle. Dolores found that rain came into her room. The landlord called upon Mr. Birn, whom he found just going to take a sea bath in his drawing-room. This arrangement, which was on a very extensive scale, had been fixed to the walls with metal plates, all the doors had been nailed up, and into this improvised basin fifty hundredweight of salt had been mixed in two

hundred buckets of water. It was a veritable little ocean. Nothing was wanting, not even the fish. It was entered by an opening made in the upper panel of the middle door, and Mr. Birn bathed in his bath every day. Before long the whole neighbourhood smelt the seaside, and Mlle. Dolores had an inch of water in her bedroom. The landlord was furious, and threatened to bring an action for damages to his fixtures.

"Haven't I the right," demanded the Englishman, "to bathe in my own apartments?"

"No, monsieur."

"If I have not the right, very well," said the Englishman, full of respect for the law of the land in which he lived. "It is a pity, for it amused me very much." And he at once gave orders for the pouring away of his ocean. It was only just in time, for a dozen oysters had been spawned on the floor.

Mr. Birn, however, did not give up the battle, and set to work to find a legal mode of conducting the curious warfare, which made a delightful theme of gossip for all idle Paris, for the incident had been noised abroad in the theatre promenades and other public places. Furthermore, Dolores held it a point of honour to come out of the struggle triumphant, since bets were made thereon.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Birn thought of the piano, and it was not a bad suggestion to set the most discordant of instruments to struggle with the most discordant of birds. When, therefore, the excellent idea occurred to him he hurried to put it into execution. He hired a piano and went in search of

a pianist, and the one supplied to him was our friend Schaunard. The Englishman recounted to him the miseries he had suffered from the paroquet and all he had done to try and bring the actress to terms.

"But, milord," said Schaunard, "there is a means of your getting rid of this beast. It is parsley. All chemists are unanimous in declaring that this pot-herb is prussic acid to animals. Chop some parsley, sprinkle it on your tapestry, and let it drop out of the window on Coco's cage. He will expire precisely in the same manner as if he had been invited to dine with Pope Alexander VI."

"I have thought of that," said the Englishman, "but the beast is so carefully looked after. The piano is more certain."

Schaunard stared at Mr. Birn, not at first comprehending.

"This is what I have planned," went on the Englishman. "The actress and her beast both sleep till midday. You follow my idea—I am going to trouble their sleep. The law of this country permits me to make music from morning till night. Do you see what I want of you?"

"But," said Schaunard, "the lady won't find it disagreeable. She will listen with delight to my music all day, and encore it. I have immense power over the instrument, and if only I had a delicate lung——"

"Oh," interrupted the Englishman, "I don't ask you to play good music. All you've got to do is to thump the keys hard. Like that," added Mr. Birn, running a scale, "and always, always the same thing, without mercy, monsieur—without mercy, and always

the same. I know something of medicine, and that sort of thing maddens. They will grow mad underneath, and it is upon this that I count. Now, monsieur, set to work at once, and I will pay you well."

"And that," said Schaunard, when he related these proceedings, "that is what I have been about for the last fortnight—one scale, nothing but the one scale from five o'clock in the morning till the evening. It is not, of course, precisely serious art, but what of that, my children? The Englishman pays two hundred francs a month for this row. It would have been suicidal to refuse such a stroke of good luck. I accepted the offer, and in two or three days I shall receive the first month's payment."

It was at the conclusion of these mutual confidences that the three friends agreed among themselves to take advantage of the influx to the common funds to give their sweethearts the splendid equipment which each of them had so long sighed for. It was agreed, over and above, that whichever of them should get his money first should wait for the others to receive theirs, so that the purchases should be made all at the same time, and that Mlles. Mimi, Musette and Phémie might enjoy together and simultaneously the delights of having a new skin, as Schaunard called it.

Now two or three days after this private conference Rodolphe received the price of his dentistry poem; it amounted to eighty francs. On the following day Marcel pocketed the honorarium Médecis paid him for ten of the portraits of the grenadiers at six francs each. Marcel and Rodolphe had no little trouble to hide the fact of their access of wealth.

"I must smell of gold, I do think," said the poet.

"Like me," said Marcel. "If Schaunard doesn't make haste it will be impossible for me to continue playing the Crœsus under the rose." But the next day the Bohemians beheld Schaunard coming towards them splendidly attired in a suit of gold-coloured nankeen.

"Oh, good gracious me!" cried Phémie, dazzled at the sight of her lover in such elegant habiliments, "where did you get that coat?"

"I found it among my papers," replied the musician, making a sign to his two friends to follow him. "I have received it," he said, when they found themselves alone. "Here are the piles," and he let the golden torrent pour through his fingers.

"Very good," said Marcel. "Let us get under way then, and begin to sack the shops. How happy Musette will be!"

"And Mimi will be overjoyed," cried Rodolphe. "Come along, be quick, Schaunard! Aren't you coming?"

"Give me an instant to reflect," replied the musician. "In decking these ladies with these worldly vanities perhaps we are committing great folly. Only think, when they resemble the illustrations of the *Iris*, are you not afraid that it may exercise a baneful effect on their characters? And is it becoming for young men like us to treat women as if we were wrinkled old millionaires? It isn't that I would hesitate to sacrifice fourteen or eighteen francs or so on Phémie for dress; but I tremble lest when she has a new hat she will not take notice of me. A simple flower in her hair, and

she looks charming. What do you think, philosopher?" added Schaunard, appealing to Colline, who had meantime entered.

"Ingratitude is the child of kind actions," said the philosopher.

"Moreover," continued Schaunard, "when one's sweetheart is well dressed, what sort of a figure do you cut in your shabby suits? You look like a sort of lady's-maid to them. I am not speaking for myself," added Schaunard, squaring himself majestically in his nankeen suit, "for, thank Heaven, I am presentable anywhere now."

But in spite of Schaunard's opposition it was finally settled to make a raid upon the milliners and drapers of the neighbourhood for the benefit of the three ladies.

And on this morning it was that, as has been related at the beginning of this chapter, Mlle. Mimi awoke to find to her astonishment that Rodolphe was not in the room. The poet and his two friends were, in fact, just then ascending the staircase, followed by a tall young man and a modiste from "The Two Monkeys," bringing patterns and materials, Schaunard, who had bought the famous trumpet, marching in front playing the overture to the *Caravane*.

Musette and Phémie, informed by Mimi, who lived on the ground floor, that hats and gowns and all sorts of things were being brought, rushed downstairs with the speed of an avalanche. At the sight of all the finery spreading out before them the three women nearly went crazy with joy. Mimi, seized with a fit of hilarity, skipped about like a kid,

flourishing a small barège scarf over her shoulders. Musette flung her arms round Marcel's neck, holding in each hand a little green kid boot, which she beat together like cymbals. Phémie gazed tearfully at Schaunard—she could say nothing but "Oh! my Alexander! my Alexander!"

"There is no fear that they will refuse the gifts of Artaxerxes," murmured Colline the philosopher. When the first paroxysm of delight had subsided, when the goods were selected and the bills paid, Rodolphe announced to the three ladies that they would have to arrange for airing their new toilettes in public the next morning.

"We are going into the country," he said.

"Oh, joy! joy!" cried Mimi. "It is not the first time that I have bought, cut out, made and worn a gown all in one day. And we have all night before us. We shall be ready, shan't we, girls?"

"We shall be ready," cried Musette and Phémie in a breath.

They fell to work instantly, and for sixteen hours scissors and needles and thread knew no rest. The next morning was the first of May. The Eastertide bells had for some days past been sounding the resurrection of spring, and it had come brilliantly and gaily. It had come—as the old German ballad has it—as lightly as the young girl who hastens to plant May flowers beneath her lover's window. It tinted the skies blue, the trees green and all nature in fair colours. It roused up the lazy sun lost in its bed of mists, bending over the snowy clouds which made its pillow, and cried, "Come! waken, my friend, waken! It is time. Waken! set forth to

work. Put on your beautiful raiment made of fresh golden rays without more ado, and show yourself in your balcony to tell the world I have come!"

Whereupon the sun rose and began his course, moving proudly and majestically as a courtier; the swallows, come back from their eastern pilgrimage, shadowed the air with their flight, the hawthorn whitened the hedges, violets scented the woodland herbage beneath the trees whence the birds flew joyously from their nests with romance in their little breasts. It was spring, the real, true spring of poets and lovers, and not Matthew Laensburg's spring—a villainous spring with a red nose, with sharp finger-nails, who freezes up the poor by their hearthstones when the last embers of their last handful of faggots have long died to pale ashes. Warm breezes floated through the translucent air, bearing the first fragrance of the country to the crowded cities. The clear, warm sunbeams streamed upon the window-panes. They said to the sick folk, "Open; we bring health"; and they poured into the chamber of the maiden looking in her mirror—that innocent and earliest love of innocent youth—"Open, sweet, that we may shine upon your beauty; we are the messengers of fair weather. You can don your light gown, your straw hat, and your little smart shoes. The woods and fields, carpeted with flowers, wait for your light tread, and the music is tuning for the dance. Good morning to you, fair one!"

As the *Angelus* sounded from the steeple of the neighbouring church the three industrious coquettes, who had hardly found time for any sleep, were

already at their mirrors bestowing final touches on their new toilettes.

All three of them were charming, dressed alike, and in their faces was the same expression of the satisfaction which is born of the realisation of long-cherished wishes. Musette's beauty was specially striking.

"I have never been so happy before," she said to Marcel. "It seems to me as if heaven had put all the happiness of my life into this moment, and I am afraid of there being none left. Ah, rubbish!—when there is no more of it, more must be made. We have the recipe for making it," she added gaily, throwing her arms round Marcel's neck.

As to Phémie, one thing disturbed her.

"I like green grass and little birds very much," she said, "but one never meets anybody in the country, and no one will see my pretty hat and my lovely gown. Couldn't we go into the country in the streets?"

At eight o'clock the whole place was startled by the blare of Schaunard's hunting-horn giving the signal of departure. Everybody ran to the window to see the Bohemians go by. Colline, who was of the party, closed in the procession, carrying the girls' parasols. An hour later all the merry band were rambling in the fields of Fontenay aux Roses. They returned home very late. Colline, who had undertaken the duties of treasurer, explained that they had forgotten to spend six francs, and placed these relics upon the table.

"What shall we do with them?" said Marcel.

"Shall we buy consols?" said Schaunard.

XVIII

FRANCINE'S MUFF

AMONG the real Bohemians of real Bohemia I once knew a man named Jacques D——. He was a sculptor, and gave promise of splendid talent; but poverty and misery did not give him time to bring the promise to fruition. He died of decline, in the March of 1844, at the Hospital of St. Louis, Ward Sainte Victoire, Bed 14.

I had known Jacques at the hospital, where I was myself laid up by a long illness. Jacques had in him, as I have said, the material for great things, but he did not believe in it much himself. During the two months I knew him, and through the time when he felt Death's hand was upon him, I never once heard him complain or indulge in the lamentations which make the *incompris* so ridiculous. He died without any affectations, terrible to look at in the convulsions of dissolution. His death brings back to my memory, moreover, one of the most atrocious scenes I have ever witnessed in this caravanserai of human suffering. His father, being informed of the event, came to claim the body, and for a long time haggled over paying the thirty-six francs claimed by the administrative regulations. He haggled also for the last offices performed by the Church, and so insistently that they finished by

giving him back six francs. When the time came for placing the corpse in the coffin, the attendant, removing the hospital wrapper, asked one of the dead man's friends who happened to be present for money to pay for a shroud for him. The poor devil, who had not a sou of his own, went to Jacques' father, who fell into a violent rage, and asked when they would cease bothering him.

The probationer who assisted in this wretched business cast a glance at the corpse, and this tender and simple observation escaped her—

"Oh, monsieur! he cannot be buried like that, poor fellow! It is so cold. At least give him a shirt, so that he does not go into the good God's presence naked!"

The father gave five francs for the shirt, but he recommended them to go to a second-hand dealer's in the Rue Grange aux Belles. "It will be cheaper," he said.

This cruelty of Jacques' father was explained to me later. He was furious at his son having embraced an artist's career, and his anger was not appeased even in the presence of death.

But I am a long way from Mlle. Francine and her muff. I must return. Mlle. Francine had been Jacques' first and only sweetheart, though he did not die old, for he was scarcely twenty-three when his father would have let him be laid naked in the ground. This love affair of his Jacques himself related to me when he was Number 14 and I was Number 16 in the Sainte Victoire Ward—a vile place to die in.

Ah, reader! before beginning this tale, which

would be beautiful if I could tell it as it was told to me by my friend Jacques, let me take a smoke in the old clay pipe which he gave me the day the doctor told him he must not smoke any more. Nevertheless, in the middle of the night, when the attendant was asleep, my friend Jacques borrowed his pipe, and asked me for a little tobacco. One grows very weary at night in these great wards, when one cannot sleep and one is in pain.

"Only two or three puffs," pleaded he, and I let him have them; and Sister Geneviève made a pretence of not smelling the smoke when she made her round. Ah, good sister! Good indeed you were, and how fair, too, you looked as you passed by sprinkling the holy water! Slowly, softly, you came on through the shadowy arches in your white veil, whose folds made such beautiful lines, so admired by our friend Jacques. Ah, good sister, you were the Beatrice of this hell upon earth! Your consoling words were so sweet that it was worth while complaining to be consoled by you. Had not my friend Jacques died one day when the snow was falling, he would have carved you a sweet little Virgin to put in your cell. Good Sister Geneviève!

A Reader: "Well, and the muff? I can't see where the muff comes in."

Another Reader: "And Mademoiselle Francine. Where is she?

First Reader: "This tale is not very cheerful."

Second Reader: "Let's get to the end of it."

I profoundly beg your pardon, gentlemen. It is my friend Jacques' pipe which drew me into these digressions. Besides, I did not undertake only to

make you laugh. Bohemia is not always merry. Jacques and Francine first met each other in a lodging-house of the Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, where each had come to live at the beginning of one April.

The artist and the young girl were quite a week before striking up the usual sort of acquaintance which is almost forced upon dwellers on the same floor. Before, however, having exchanged a single word they seemed to know each other. Francine knew that her neighbour was a poor devil of an artist, and Jacques knew that his neighbour was a little dressmaker run away from her own family to escape the bad treatment of a stepmother. She performed miracles of economy to make both ends meet, and as pleasure was an unknown quantity to her she had no desire for it. This is how they came to obey the common law of their mode of life. One April evening Jacques returned to his lodging worn out with fatigue. He had fasted since morning, and felt profoundly downcast and sad, with one of those vague depressions which, having no precise cause, seize upon one anywhere and at any moment —a sort of apoplexy of the heart to which the unfortunate who live alone are specially subject. Jacques, who felt his little room stifling, opened the window for a breath of fresh air. It was a lovely evening, and the setting sun was casting his melancholy magic of colour on the heights of Montmartre. Jacques remained pensively at his window listening to the winged choir of cheery song that broke the evening calm, and it increased his feeling of melancholy. As a raven passed with a croak across the

window he thought of the time when ravens brought bread to Elijah, the pious hermit, and he came to the conclusion that ravens were no longer so charitable. Hardly able to bear himself any longer, he closed the window, drew the curtains, and not having any money to buy oil for his lamp, he lighted a resin candle which he had brought from the Grand Chartreuse when he had visited it. Dropping deeper and deeper into his sad mood he got his pipe. "Lucky I have enough tobacco to hide the pistol," he muttered to himself as he began to smoke.

He must have been inordinately melancholy that evening to think of hiding the pistol. It was his resource at great crises, and was generally successful. This was how he did it: Jacques smoked tobacco on which he had sprinkled a few drops of laudanum, and he smoked until the cloud of smoke issuing from his pipe had grown thick enough to hide all the objects in his little room, especially a pistol that was hanging on the wall. It was a matter of a dozen pipes. When the pistol was quite invisible it almost always happened that the smoke and laudanum combined sent Jacques to sleep, and generally on the threshold of his dreams Jacques' melancholy left him.

But that evening, after using all his tobacco and the pistol was entirely hidden, Jacques still remained wretched. That same evening Mlle. Francine, on the contrary, was in an extremely gay mood as she mounted to her room, and her gaiety, like Jacques' melancholy, had no cause. It was simply one of those happy times with her which fell from heaven,

sent by God into honest hearts. Mlle. Francine then was in a merry mood, and sang cheerily as she ascended the staircase; but as she opened her door a sudden gust of wind blowing in at the window of the landing extinguished her candle.

"How provoking!" exclaimed the young girl. "That means going all the way back, down six flights and up again!"

But then perceiving a light across the doorway of Jacques' room, laziness, mingling with a feeling of curiosity, suggested that she should go and ask the artist for a light. It is a service, thought she, that neighbours constantly render each other, and there was nothing compromising in it. She therefore tapped two soft little taps on Jacques' door, and he opened it, a trifle surprised at such a late visit; but she had scarcely stepped inside the room than the tobacco smoke took away her breath, and before she could utter a word she fell senseless into a chair, and the candlestick and her key slipped to the floor. It was midnight; everyone in the house was asleep. Jacques did not deem it wise to call for assistance; he feared to compromise his neighbour. He contented himself with opening his window and letting the fresh air blow in, and after he had sprinkled a few drops of water on the young girl's face she opened her eyes and gradually came to herself. When, five minutes later, she had entirely recovered consciousness Francine explained what had led her to the artist's door, and made many apologies for what had happened.

"Now I am all right again," she said. "I will go back to my room."

And she had already opened the door of Jacques' room when she perceived that not only had she still omitted to light her candle, but that also she had not her key.

"How stupid I am!" she said, putting her candle to the resin candle. "I came here for a light, and I am going away without it!"

But at that moment the current of air set up in the room by the opening of the window suddenly extinguished the waxlight, and left the two young people in darkness.

"One would think it had been done on purpose," said Francine. "Forgive me, monsieur, all the trouble I have occasioned you, and be kind enough to strike a light, so that I can look for my key."

"Certainly, mademoiselle," replied Jacques, groping for matches.

He would soon have found them, but a curious notion struck him, and he put the matches back in his pocket, exclaiming—

"Good heavens, mademoiselle! Now comes another difficulty. I haven't a single match left! I used the last when I came in."

"I hope that is a neatly made taradiddle," thought he.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried Francine; "I could easily find my way without a light. My room is not so big that I need lose myself in it; but I must have my key, monsieur. I beg you to help me look for it, monsieur. It must be on the floor."

"Let us try," said Jacques.

And down they went on their knees in search of the lost key; but both being guided by the same

instinct, it happened that during the search their hands, groping in the same direction, kept coming in contact, and as they were both very awkward at it, they did not find the key.

"The moon, which is so clouded over now, always shines full into my room," said Jacques. "Let us wait a little while. Presently it will break through the clouds."

And while they waited for the rising of the moon they began to chat. A chat in the midst of the darkness, in a narrow chamber, on a night in spring; a chat which, at first frivolous and trifling, reached the chapter of confidences—you know the road that takes. Words become gradually confused, full of hesitations, voices get lower, the words alternate with sighs, hands meet and complete the thought which mounts from the heart to the lips. Find the end of it in your memory, O young people. Recall, youth, recall, young maiden—you who now to-day walk hand in hand and three days ago did not know each other.

At last the moon unveiled herself, and her brilliancy flooded the little chamber. Mlle. Francine started from her reverie, uttering a little cry.

"What is the matter?" asked Jacques, taking her in his arms.

"Nothing," murmured Francine; "I thought I heard someone knock." And without Jacques observing she pushed the key, which she had just caught sight of, under a chair with her foot. She did not want to find it.

First Reader: "I certainly shall not let my daughter read this story."

Francine's Muff

Second Reader: "So far I haven't seen a single hair of Mademoiselle Francine's muff, and as for the girl herself, I don't even know what she is like, whether she is dark or fair."

Patience, O my readers, patience! I have promised you a muff, and I will give it you in course of time, as my friend Jacques gave it to his poor friend Francine, who became his sweetheart, as I have indicated above. She was fair, this Francine—fair, and of a lively disposition, which is not ordinarily the case. She had known nothing of love till she was twenty, but a vague presentiment of early death warned her not to delay longer if she desired to know it.

She saw Jacques, and she loved him. Their union lasted six months. It was begun in springtime; they parted in autumn. Francine was consumptive. She knew it, and her friend Jacques knew it also. A fortnight after they began life together he learned it from one of his friends who was a doctor. "She will go with the coming of the yellow leaves," the doctor said. Francine had overheard the words, and saw the despair which it caused her Jacques.

"What matter the yellow leaves?" she said, all her love shining in her smile. "What does it matter about autumn? It is summer now, and the leaves are green. Let us enjoy it, my friend. When you see me about to part from life you must take me in your arms and hold me tight, and forbid me to go. You know I am obedient, and I shall remain."

And this exquisite being passed for the next five

months through all the miseries of Bohemian existence, a song and a smile on her lips.

Jacques tried to deceive himself. His friends often said to him, "Francine is worse; she needs care." Then Jacques beat up all Paris to try and find remedies, but Francine would not hear of them, and threw the drugs and medicines out of the window. At night, when the coughing fits seized her, she would go out of the room and have her fit out on the landing, that Jacques might not hear.

One day, when they had gone together into the country, Jacques saw a tree whose leaves were beginning to fade. He gazed sadly at Francine, who was walking slowly and dreamily.

Francine saw Jacques grow pale, and she guessed the cause.

"How silly you are!" she said, embracing him; "this is only July. There are three months to come before October. With such love as ours—unchanging, never ceasing—time is double; and besides, if I feel worse when the leaves begin to fade, we will go and live together in a pine forest. There the leaves are always green."

* * * * *

When October came Francine could no longer leave her bed. Jacques' friend attended her. The little chamber they lodged in was very high up, and looked into a courtyard where there was a tree, which every day grew more bare of its leaves. Jacques fixed a curtain before the window to hide the tree from the sick girl, but Francine made him draw it back.

"Oh, my love," she said to Jacques, "I will give

you a hundred times more kisses than it has leaves"; and then she added, "Besides, I am much better. I mean to go out soon, but as it will be cold and I don't want to have red hands, you must buy me a muff."

All the time she was ill this muff was her dream.

On All Saints' Eve, seeing Jacques more miserable even than usual, she wanted to cheer him, and to prove that she was better she got up. Just at that moment the doctor came in. He forced her to return to her bed.

"Jacques," he said in a low voice to the artist, "courage, man! All is over. She is dying."

Jacques burst into tears.

"You can give her anything she asks for now," added the doctor. "There is no hope!"

Francine guessed from his eyes what the doctor had said to Jacques.

"Don't listen to him!" she cried, stretching out her arms towards her lover. "Don't listen to him; he is telling lies. We will go out together tomorrow. It is All Saints' Day. It will be cold. Go and buy me the muff, please; I am afraid of chilblains this winter."

The doctor was going to follow his friend from the room, but Francine detained him.

"Go now at once and buy my muff," she said to Jacques. "Get a good one, so that it will last a long time."

And when they were alone she said to the doctor—

"Oh, monsieur! I am going to die, and I know it. But before I go let me have something that will give me strength to live through one more

night. I entreat you; make me beautiful for one night more, and after that I will die, since God will not let me live any longer."

While the doctor was doing his best to console her the chill north-east wind swept round the little draughty room and tossed a faded leaf of the tree in the courtyard on to her bed. Francine drew aside the curtain, and saw that the tree was completely bare.

"It is the last," she murmured, putting the leaf under her pillow.

"You will not die till to-morrow," said the doctor. "You have one more night."

"Ah! what happiness!" said the young girl. "One winter's night. It will be long."

Jacques came in again. He had brought the muff.

"It is a very pretty one," said Francine; "I shall take it out when I go."

She passed the night with Jacques. The next day, All Saints' Day, as the midday *Angelus* began to ring, the agonies of death seized her, and her whole frame trembled.

"My hands are cold," murmured she. "Give me my muff." And she thrust her hands into the soft fur.

"It is the end!" said the doctor to Jacques. "Kiss her." Jacques sealed his lips upon hers. At the last moment they wanted to take her muff away, but she kept her hands tight in it.

"No, no," she said, "leave it. It is winter-time; it is cold. Ah! my poor Jacques! Ah! my poor Jacques! What will become of you? Ah! my God!"

And the next day Jacques was alone.

First Reader: "I said this wasn't going to be a cheerful tale."

What, then, reader? One can't always be merry.

It was the morning of All Saints' Day. Francine had just died. Two men watched by the bedside. One, who was standing near the bed, was the doctor; the other, kneeling beside it, was pressing his lips on the dead hands, almost consuming them in the anguish of his despair. It was Jacques, Francine's sweetheart. For more than six hours he had been stupefied with grief. A passing street organ roused him.

The organ was playing an air that Francine often used to sing of a morning as she was dressing. One of those insane hopes which are only born of profound despair passed Jacques' mind. His thoughts went back into the near past, the time when Francine was only dying. He forgot the present, and began to tell himself that the dead girl was only sleeping, and that presently she would waken and open her lips to sing her morning song. But the sounds of the organ had not died away before Jacques was facing realities once more. Francine's lips were eternally closed for songs, and the smile which her last thought had brought to them was already fast beginning to fade from them in the shadows of death.

"Be brave, Jacques," said the doctor, who was a friend of the sculptor's.

Jacques rose, and said, as he looked at the doctor, "It is all at an end, isn't it? There is no hope?"

Without replying to his folly, his friend closed the

bed-curtains, and coming beside the sculptor, he grasped his hand.

"Francine is dead," he said. "It was to be expected. God knows we have done all we could to save her. She was a good girl, Jacques, and loved you very dearly, more even than you loved her, and differently, for her love was nothing but love, while yours had alloy in it. Francine is dead, but all is not yet at an end. There are arrangements to be made for burying her. We will go and attend to it together, and while we are away we will ask your neighbour to watch here."

Jacques allowed his friend to lead him away. All day they were running about to the registrar's office, and the undertaker's, and the cemetery. As Jacques had no money, the doctor pawned his watch, a ring, and some articles of wearing apparel to defray the expenses of the funeral, which was fixed for next day. They returned late in the evening. The good woman his neighbour made Jacques eat something.

"Yes," he said, "I shall be glad of it; I am cold, and I need a little strength, for I have got to work to-night."

The neighbour and the doctor did not understand. Jacques sat down to the table, and began to eat so fast that he nearly choked. Then he asked for something to drink, but before he had placed the glass to his lips he let it fall to the ground. The glass, shattered by the fall, had wakened in his mind a memory which recalled his momentarily stifled anguish. The day when Francine first came to live with him she, already ailing, had felt faint, and

Jacques had given her a little *eau sucrée* in that glass. Afterwards it had been carefully kept as a relic of love. On the rare occasions when a little money came in Jacques had bought for Francine one or two bottles of strengthening wine which had been prescribed for her, and it was always from this glass that Francine drank the wine, which seemed to brighten and sparkle with her gaiety.

Jacques sat for a long time gazing silently at the scattered fragments of the fragile cherished souvenir, and it seemed to him that his heart was breaking and that he could feel the fragments wounding his breast. When he recovered himself a little he picked up the bits of glass and threw them into a drawer. Then he asked the neighbour to fetch him a couple of candles, and to have a pail of water put by his door.

"Don't go away," he said to the doctor, who was not, in fact, thinking of leaving him, "I shall want you presently."

The water and the candles were brought, and then the two friends were alone together.

"What are you going to do?" said the doctor, seeing Jacques pour some of the water into a wooden bowl and throw handfuls of plaster into it.

"What am I going to do? Can't you guess?" said the sculptor. "I am going to take a cast of Francine's face, and since I should not have the courage for it if I were alone, I know you will not leave me."

Then, approaching the bed, Jacques parted the curtains and drew aside the sheet which covered

the dead girl's face. His hands began to tremble, and a half-stifled sob escaped his lips.

"Bring the light," he cried to his friend, "and come and hold the bowl." One of the candles was fixed at the head of the bed in a manner to cast all its brilliancy on the face of the dead; the other was placed at the foot. Taking a little brush dipped in oil, the sculptor anointed the eyelashes, the eyebrows and the hair, which he arranged in the way Francine had been accustomed to wear it.

"In that way she will not suffer when the mask is taken off," said Jacques to himself.

These precautions taken, and having placed the head of the dead girl in a favourable position, Jacques began to pour the plaster on in successive layers until the mould had attained the required thickness. In a quarter of an hour the operation was ended, and was completely successful. By a strange accident a change had come over Francine's face. The blood, which had not as yet had time entirely to congeal, warmed doubtless by the heat of the plaster, had flowed back to the surface, and a rosy flush gradually suffused the dull whiteness of the brow and cheeks. The eyelids, which had opened when the mask was lifted, revealed the soft azure of her eyes, whose expression wore a kind of vague intelligence, and from the lips, half-opened in a dawning smile, there seemed to come that last word—forgotten in the final adieu—which the heart only hears.

Who can affirm that intelligence is absolutely quenched when the insensibility of the body begins? Who can say that the passions are extinguished, and

die exactly at the moment of the last beat of the heart which they have stirred? May not the soul voluntarily linger captive in the body already clothed for the grave, and, from the threshold of the tomb, spend a little while in tears and regrets? Those who go have good reason for mistrusting those who remain.

At the moment Jacques was endeavouring to preserve her features by the help of art, who knows but that a memory of the life that was past had come to waken Francine in the first sleep of her long rest? Perhaps she remembered that he whom she had left was artist as well as lover; that he was both the one and the other, because he could not be one without the other; that for him love was the soul of art, and that if he had loved her much it was because she had known how to be woman and mistress to him—an embodied sentiment. And so, perhaps, Francine, desiring to leave Jacques the human image which had become for him an incarnate idea, had known, dead-cold as she was, how once more to reinvest her face with all the radiance of her love and the graces of her youth. In art she would live again.

And perhaps the poor girl's thought was correct enough, for among true artists there exist these strange Pygmalions, who, unlike other lovers, would fain change their living Galateas into marble.

Looking at the serenity of that face which bore no trace of pain, no one would have guessed at the long suffering which had preceded her death. Francine appeared as if she were in a dream of love; and one might have said she had died of her own beauty.

The doctor, overcome with fatigue, slept in a corner.

Jacques fell once more into doubt. His soul, floating in delusions, insisted on fancying that she whom he had so greatly loved would waken once more, and as faint nerve contractions, produced by the action of the casting, stirred at intervals the immobility of the body, the simulation of life held Jacques in the bonds of his happy illusion till morning, when an official came to verify the death and authorise the interment. And truly, if the foolishness of despair doubted of the death of this beautiful girl, all the infallibility of science was needed to believe in it.

While the neighbour prepared Francine for her last rest Jacques was led into another room, where he found some of his friends assembled to follow the cortège. In Jacques' presence the Bohemians abstained, out of the affection they had for him, from all the set consolatory speeches which only aggravate grief. Without uttering one of the words so difficult to find, so painful to hear, they each silently wrung the hand of their friend.

"This death is a great misfortune for Jacques," said one of them to another.

"Yes," replied the painter Lazare, a strange creature who almost at the outset of his career had schooled himself into conquering down all the rebel passions of youth and imposing rigid inflexibility upon them so strenuously that the artist had finished by crushing out the man, "but a misfortune which he voluntarily brought into his life. Since he knew Francine Jacques is greatly changed."

"She made him happy," said another.

"Happy!" rejoined Lazare. "What do you call

happy? How can you call that happiness, the feeling which puts a man in such a state as Jacques is in now? Place a masterpiece of painting or of sculpture before him at this moment, he would not turn his head to look at it; and yet for one look again only at Francine I'll dare to say he would trample over a Titian or a Raphael. My mistress is immortal, and will never play me false. She lives in the Louvre, and her name is *La Joconde.*"

While Lazare was on the point of continuing his theories of art and sentiment they were summoned to start for the church.

After a few muttered prayers, the little procession continued its way to the cemetery. As it was All Souls' Day an immense crowd was in the place. A good many people looked after Jacques as he walked bareheaded behind the hearse.

"Poor fellow!" said one. "It is his mother, no doubt."

"It is his father," said another.

"It is his sister," said others.

Come there to study the outward expression of grief and regret at this mournful festival of memories, which is celebrated once a year in the November fogs, a poet, as he saw Jacques pass, guessed that he was following his dead sweetheart to the grave. When they reached the opened piece of ground the Bohemians, bareheaded, gathered round. Jacques went to the very verge; his friend the doctor held him by the arm.

The gravediggers and cemetery folk, being extra busy, were anxious to get the affair over.

"There is not to be any speech," said one of them. "So much the better. Whoop! Come along, quick!"

And the coffin was taken from the hearse, tied with cords and let down into the grave. The men drew up the ropes, and taking their spades, began to shovel in the earth. It was soon filled up, and a little wooden cross was stuck in. In the midst of his sobs the doctor heard Jacques cry despairingly—

"Oh, my youth! It is you they are burying!"

Jacques was a member of a society called "The Water Drinkers," which had apparently been founded in imitation of the famous society of the Rue des Quatre Vents which is referred to in the fine novel of *Un grand homme de province.* Only there was a vast difference between the heroes of that fraternity and the Water Drinkers, who, like most imitators, had exaggerated the system which they desired to adopt. This difference will be understood by the single fact that in M. de Balzac's book the members of the brotherhood finish by attaining the end at which they aimed, proving that every system which succeeds is good, while after several years of existence the Society of the Water Drinkers was naturally broken up by the death of all its members, without the name of one of them being attached to any work to attest they ever existed. During his union with Francine Jacques' connection with the Society of the Water Drinkers was very lax. The needs of life had forced the artist to violate certain of its conditions, signed and sworn to by the Water Drinkers on the day the society was founded.

Mounted on their stilts of an absurd pride, these young men had laid down as a first principle of their association that they would never forsake the higher walks of their art; that is to say, that in spite of the poverty of their mortal lot they would none of them bow to Necessity. Thus the poet Melchior would never consent to lay aside what he called his lyre to write a commercial prospectus or a topical pamphlet. It was all very well for the poet Rodolphe, a good-for-nothing, who was good for everything, and who never let a hundred-sou piece pass him without trying to hook it in with no matter what. The painter Lazare, a proud bundle of rags, had never soiled his brushes by painting the portrait of a tailor holding a parrot on his finger, as friend Marcel had once done in exchange for the famous coat called Methuselah, which the fingers of each of his lady-loves had embroidered with darns.

While the sculptor Jacques held communion of ideas with the Water Drinkers he submitted to the tyranny of the society's rules; but since his connection with Francine he would not subject the poor girl, already ailing and weak, to the ruling to which he had submitted in his solitary days. Jacques' was essentially a true and loyal nature. He went to the president of the society, the exclusive Lazare, and informed him that henceforth he should accept all work coming in his way which would be productive of money. "My dear fellow," replied Lazare, "your declaration of love was your leave-taking of art. We will remain your friends if you desire it, but we are no longer your associates. Follow your trade at your convenience; for my part,

I regard you no longer as a sculptor—you are just a plaster spoiler. It is true you may be able to drink wine, but we who continue to drink water and eat our portions of bread, we remain artists."

Notwithstanding Lazare's observations, Jacques remained an artist; but to keep Francine beside him he undertook, when he got the chance of it, any sort of bread-winning work. It was in this way he worked for a long time in the studio of the decorator Romagnési. Skilful in execution, ingenious in invention, Jacques, without forsaking serious art, might have acquired a big reputation as a worker in compositions of the kind which have become one of the chief elements of trade in luxuries. But Jacques was idle, like all true artists and amorous poets are apt to be. Youth in him had matured tardily but ardently, and, with a presentiment of her early death, he desired to exhaust it all in the arms of Francine. So it frequently happened that good chances of work came knocking at his door without his answering, because he would have had to put himself to inconvenience, and found himself only too well content to dream on in the light of his sweetheart's eyes.

When Francine was dead the sculptor went to see his old friends the Water Drinkers; but the spirit of Lazare dominated the society, all of whose members were fossilised in the egoism of art. Jacques did not find there what he was in search of. They did not understand his wretchedness, which they sought to calm down with reason and logic, and seeing this lack of sympathy he preferred to isolate his misery rather than have it exposed for discussion.

He broke completely, therefore, with the Water Drinkers, and lived entirely alone.

A few days after Francine's funeral Jacques went to a marble-cutter of Montparnasse Cemetery and proposed the following arrangement to him: the mason was to furnish him with iron railings round Francine's grave, in the midst of which Jacques was to erect a monument of his own design. He was further to give him a block of white marble in consideration of his working three months for him either as stone-carver or as sculptor. The mason had at that time several important orders. He went to Jacques' studio, and the sight of the work he was engaged upon there told him that the chance which had brought Jacques his way was a little fortune to him. A week later Francine's grave had its enclosure, in the midst of which the wooden cross had been replaced by a stone cross deeply engraved with her name.

Fortunately Jacques had to do with an honest man, who was perfectly conscious that a little cast-iron and three square feet of marble would not pay three months of Jacques' work, whose talent would bring him a great deal of money in a short time. He offered him a share in his business, but Jacques would not agree to it. The little variety of subject that could be treated was against his inventive talent; besides, he had what he wanted — a big piece of marble from which he intended to create a masterpiece for Francine's tomb.

At the beginning of the following spring Jacques' worldly prospects had considerably bettered. His friend the doctor introduced him to a great foreign

nobleman who was about to make his home in Paris, and was building a magnificent house in one of the best quarters of the city.

Several famous artists had been commissioned to adorn and add to the splendour of the little palace. Jacques was required to carve a mantelpiece for the great drawing-room. I think I can still see his cartoons. It was a charming piece of work; the entire poem of winter-time was told in the marble which was to make a frame for the flames. Jacques' studio being too small, he asked for and obtained for the execution of the work a corner in the house itself, which was already inhabited. A good sum was advanced to him on the price agreed for his labours. From this Jacques began to repay the doctor the money he had lent him when Francine died, and he hastened to the cemetery to cover the ground where his love slept with a veritable field of flowers.

But the spring had come before Jacques, and upon the young girl's grave a thousand flowers had sprung up in the green grass. Jacques had not the heart to tear them up, for he thought the flowers had in them something of his lost love. When the gardener asked him what he wanted done with the roses and pansies which he had brought, Jacques told him to plant them on a neighbouring new-made grave, the poor resting-place of some poor creature, unenclosed and having no memorial but a morsel of wood stuck in the ground, surmounted with a wreath of black paper—the poor tribute of poverty-stricken grief. Jacques left the cemetery another creature from that he had entered it. He gazed joyfully at

the glorious spring sun, the sun which had a thousand times gilded the hair of Francine as she passed through the fields toying with the tall grasses and wild flowers with her white hands. Sweet thoughts crowded into his mind. Passing a little cabaret on the outer boulevard, he recalled a day when, overtaken by a storm, he had entered the place with Francine and dined there. Jacques went in now, and, seating himself at the identical table, ordered dinner. The dessert was put in a plate painted with little pictures. He recognised the plate, and remembered how Francine spent a good half-hour trying to make out the rebus the pictures presented; and he also remembered a song she sang, inspired by some beautiful red wine that was not very expensive and contained more gaiety than juice of the grape. But these gentle memories awoke in him only the old love, not the grief. Prone to superstition as are all poetical and dreamy minds, Jacques imagined that it was Francine who, having heard him near her that morning, had sent him this handful of happy memories from the depths of her grave, and he would not dull them with a tear. He left the tavern with a light step, his head high, his eyes bright, his heart beating, almost a smile on his lips, and humming as he went the refrain of Francine's song:—

"Love's roaming my way,
I will open my door to him
Wide as the day."

This refrain in Jacques' mouth was a memory, but also it was a song; and perhaps without being conscious of it, Jacques took that day the first step

along the road of transition which leads from sadness to melancholy, and thence to forgetfulness. Alas! for what one would and what one does. The eternal and just law of change wills it to be thus.

Even as the flowers which, born perhaps of Francine's body, had pushed through her grave, the sap of youth flowed in Jacques' heart, where the memories of the old love were wakening vague aspirations towards new loves. Moreover, Jacques was of the race of poets and artists who make passion an instrument of art and of poetry, and whose souls live and move only by the heart's promptings. With Jacques invention was the true child of sentiment, and into everything he did he put something of himself. He began to feel that memories were no longer sufficient for him, and that his heart was grinding itself away for lack of sustenance, like a mill when grain is wanting. Work had no longer any charm for him; invention, once ardent and spontaneous, no longer came without painful effort. He grew discontented, and almost envied the existence of his old friends the Water Drinkers.

He sought distraction, snatched after pleasure and formed new ties. He chummed with the poet Rodolphe, whom he met in a café, and they conceived a great mutual sympathy. Jacques told him of all his wretchedness, and Rodolphe was not long in grasping the cause of it.

"My friend," he said, "I know what that is," and tapping Jacques on the breast where his heart was, added, "Quick, and at once, you must rekindle the smouldering fire that lies there. Fan without delay a little passion, and ideas will return to you."

"Ah," said Jacques, "I loved Francine too much for that!"

"That need not hinder you from still loving her. You will be kissing her on another's lips."

"Ah," said Jacques, "if only I could meet with a girl like her!" And he parted from Rodolphe deep in thought.

* * * * *

Six weeks later Jacques was his old self again, re-created by the tender glances of a pretty girl named Marie, whose too delicate beauty slightly reminded him of poor Francine. Nothing, in fact, could be lovelier than this Marie, who was eighteen years old, "all but six weeks," as she never failed to add. Her love-making with Jacques had begun in the moonlight, in the garden of an open-air ball, to the sound of a harsh violin, a consumptive double-bass and a clarionette that whistled like a blackbird. Jacques saw her as she promenaded gravely round the space reserved for dancing. Seeing him pass, stiff and bolt upright in his eternal black coat buttoned to the neck, the smart, giddy girls frequenting the place, who knew the artist by sight, exclaimed to each other—

"What does that death's-head of a creature want here? Does anyone require burying?"

And Jacques walked on alone, his heart bleeding from the thorns of memory, which the orchestra was making sharper by its performance of a gay dance tune that sounded in his ears mournful as a *De profundis*. It was in the middle of his reveries that he perceived Marie looking at him from a corner and bursting with laughter at his solemn aspect.

Jacques lifted his eyes as he heard, not three steps away, this shout of laughter from under a pink hat. He approached the young girl, and spoke a few words to her; she responded. He offered her his arm for a promenade round the garden; she accepted. He told her he thought her beautiful as an angel; she made him say it twice. He stole green apples for her from the trees; she munched them enjoyably, laughing loudly, which seemed like the refrain of her happy nature. Jacques thought of the Bible, and told himself that one need not despair with any women, and still less with those who were fond of apples. He took another turn with the pink hat round the garden, and so it came about that having gone to the ball alone, he did not return in the same fashion.

He had not, however, forgotten Francine, and, following out Rodolphe's words, he kissed her every day on Marie's lips and worked in secret at the figure he intended to place on the dead girl's grave.

One day, when he received some payments, Jacques bought a dress for Marie—a black one. The young girl was very pleased, only she considered that black was not a cheerful colour for the summer; but Jacques told her he was very fond of black, and that she would greatly please him by wearing the gown every day. Marie complied.

One Saturday Jacques said to her, "Come early to-morrow; we will go into the country."

"How delightful!" said Marie. "I am preparing a surprise for you. You will see, there will be sunshine to-morrow."

Marie spent the night in finishing a new gown

which she had saved up her money to buy, a pretty pink gown. And on Sunday morning she came—dressed in her smart purchase—to Jacques' studio.

The artist received her coldly, almost savagely.

"And I thought to give you so much pleasure in making myself a present of this lovely dress!" said Marie, who could not comprehend Jacques' coldness.

"We are not going into the country," he said. "You had better go away again. I have to work to-day."

Marie went home with a swelling heart. On the way she met a young man who knew Jacques' story, and who had paid court to her.

"Why, Mademoiselle Marie," said he, "you are no longer in mourning, I see."

"In mourning?" said Marie. "For whom?"

"What, you don't know? Yet it is known well enough by everyone. The black gown he gave you——"

"Well?" said Marie.

"Well, it was meant for mourning. Jacques made you wear mourning for Francine."

From that day forward Jacques never saw Marie again.

This rupture was unlucky for him. The bad days came back, he got no more work, and fell into fearful poverty. Not knowing what was to become of him, he begged his friend the doctor to get him admitted into the hospital. The doctor saw at the first glance that the admission would not be difficult to obtain. Jacques, who was aware of his own state of health, was on the way to rejoin Francine.

He was received into the Hospital Saint Louis.

As he could still move about and walk, Jacques begged the superintendent of the hospital to give him a little disused room, and there he took a stool, his sculptor's tools and some clay. For the first couple of weeks he worked at the figure which he intended for Francine's tomb. It was a great angel with widespread wings. This figure, which was the likeness of Francine, was never quite finished, for Jacques soon became unable to mount his studio stairs, and in a short time he could no longer leave his bed. One day the note-book of the ward doctor came into his hands, and Jacques, seeing what remedies were prescribed for him, knew that he could not live. He wrote to his family, and called Sister Geneviève to him, who tended him with the greatest care.

"Sister," said Jacques to her, "up in the room which you got them to lend me is a little plaster model. This statuette, which represents an angel, was intended to be placed on a grave, but I have not had time to do it in marble, although I have a splendid piece of it at home—white marble, veined with pink. And so, sister, I give you my little statuette to put in the chapel of your community."

Jacques died a few days later. As the funeral took place on the same day as the opening of the Salon the Water Drinkers did not assist at it. "Art before all," as Lazare had said.

Jacques' family was not a rich one, and no special grave awaited him.

He was buried somewhere.

XIX

MUSETTE'S WHIMS

IT will perhaps be remembered how the painter Marcel sold the Jew Médecis his famous picture of "The Passage of the Red Sea," which ultimately did duty as a sign over the shop of a provision dealer. The day following its sale, which had been celebrated by a grand supper given by the Jew to the Bohemians as seal to the bargain, Marcel, Schaunard, Colline and Rodolphe got up very late. All of them still stupid with the indulgences of the previous night, they were unable at first to remember exactly what had happened, and as the midday *Angelus* rang from the steeple of a neighbouring church they looked at each other with melancholy smiles.

"There is the bell whose pious sound calls humanity to the refectory," said Marcel.

"Yes; it is in fact," said Rodolphe, "the solemn hour when honest men repair to the dining-room."

"We must find the way to become honest men," murmured Colline, for whom every day was the day of Saint Appetite.

"Ah, milk-bottles of my nurse! Ah, four meals a day of my childhood! What has become of you?" added Schaunard. "What has become of you?"

he repeated in a key that was full of soft and dreamy melancholy.

"I'll venture to say that in Paris at this moment there are more than a hundred thousand cutlets on the gridiron!" said Marcel.

"And as many rump steaks!" chimed in Rodolphe.

In ironical antithesis to the discussion of the four friends on the terrible daily problem of breakfast, the waiters of the restaurant close by were shrieking out the orders of consumers.

"They will not cease, those brigands!" said Marcel. "Their every word is like a dig in my stomach!"

"The wind is in the north," gravely said Colline, pointing to a weather-vane twirling on a neighbouring roof. "We shall not have any breakfast to-day. The elements are opposed to it."

"Why?" challenged Marcel.

"It is an atmospherical observation I have made," continued the philosopher. "The north wind almost always signifies abstinence, just as a south wind ordinarily indicates pleasure and good cheer. That is what philosophy calls warnings from above."

"To be taken fasting!" said Rodolphe, with a ferocious grin.

At this moment Schaunard, who had thrust his hand into the abysmal space which served him for a pocket, dragged it out again with a yell of agony.

"Help! Ah! there is someone in my pockets!" he howled, as he struggled violently to free his hand from the claw of a live lobster.

Suddenly another cry responded to his. It was Marcel, who having mechanically thrust his hands

into his pockets, came upon an America which as yet had remained undiscovered; that is to say, the hundred and fifty francs which the Jew Médecis had given him the night before for "The Passage of the Red Sea." Memory then returned all at once to the Bohemians.

"Salute, gentlemen!" said Marcel, pouring on the table a handful of silver amid which gleamed five or six new louis.

"They might be alive," said Colline.

"What sweet voices!" said Schaunard, as he clinked the gold pieces together.

"How pretty they are, these medals!" said Rodolphe. "They might be scraps of the sun. If I were king, I would have no other money than these, and I would stamp my sweetheart's likeness on them."

"When one thinks that there is a country full of gold nuggets," said Schaunand. "Formerly the Indians gave four for two sous. One of my relatives visited America. He was interred in the stomachs of the savages. It was a great wrong to his family."

"Ah, yes; but," said Marcel, looking at the lobster who had begun to walk about the room, "where does this beast come from?"

"I remember now," said Schaunard. "I made a tour of Médecis' kitchen, and the reptile must have tumbled into my pocket without meaning it. These creatures are short-sighted. Since I have him, I shall keep him," he added. "I should prefer to keep him. I will tame him and paint him in red. It will be more cheerful. I have felt melancholy since Phémie went away. He will be company."

"Gentlemen," cried Colline, "please to observe that the weather-vane has turned to the south. We will have breakfast."

"We will, indeed," said Marcel, taking one of the pieces of gold; "we will cook this one with plenty of sauce."

Slowly and gravely they studied the *carte*. Each dish was the occasion of a discussion and voted on by the majority. The omelette soufflée, proposed by Schaunard, was rejected, as also were the white wines, against which Marcel inveighed in an improvisation which showed his vinous knowledge.

"The first duty of wine is to be red," cried the artist. "Talk not to me of your white wines!"

"Yet," said Schaunard, "champagne!"

"Ah, rubbish! An elegant cider! An epileptic cocoa! I would give all the cellars of Epernay and of Aï for a bottle of Burgundy. Besides, we have no grisettes to entice, nor vaudevilles to write. I vote against champagne."

The programme at last drawn up, Schaunard and Colline went down to the neighbouring restaurant to order the banquet.

"What if we have a fire?" said Marcel.

"All right," said Rodolphe. "We shan't be out of the fashion. The thermometer has suggested it this long time past. The chimney will be greatly astonished."

And they ran to the top of the stairs and called to Colline to send up some wood.

A few minutes after, Schaunard and Colline came up again, followed by a man with a huge load of faggots.

While Marcel was rummaging in his drawer for some waste paper to light the fire with, he chanced upon a letter whose handwriting gave him a fit of trembling, and he hid it from his friends as he fell to reading it.

It was written in pencil by Musette in days gone by, while she lived with Marcel. This note was a year old to the day. It contained only a few words :—

"My dear Friend,—Do not be uneasy about me ; I shall be back soon. I have gone out a little way to warm myself with a walk. It freezes, and there is no fuel. I have broken up the last two chair-legs, but they did not burn long enough to boil an egg. The wind comes in, blowing me a lot of bad advice which would vex you if I listened to it. I would rather go out for a little while. I am going to look at the shops round about. They say there is velvet being sold at ten francs a yard. We shall see if it is true. It seems incredible. I will be back to dinner. "Musette."

"Poor girl!" murmured Marcel, slipping the letter into his pocket, and for a minute he remained lost in thought, his head in his hands. At this time the Bohemians had been for a good while past in a state of widower-hood, with the exception of Colline, however, whose mistress had always been invisible and anonymous.

Phémie, Schaunard's amiable companion, had met with an ingenuous soul who had offered her his heart, some mahogany furniture and a ring made of his hair, which was red. A fortnight after he had given it her, however, Phémie's lover wanted back his heart and his furniture, because he had noticed in looking at her hands that she had a hair-ring—black hair—and he suspected her of treason.

Nevertheless Phémie had not ceased to be true, only, as some of her friends had joked her about the red hair, she had had it dyed black. The gentleman was so pleased with the explanation that he bought Phémie a silk gown. It was the first she had ever had. The day he gave it to her the poor child cried, "Now I could die."

As to Musette, she had almost become an official personage, and for three or four months Marcel had seen nothing of her. As for Mimi, Rodolphe had never so much as heard her name mentioned except by himself when he was alone.

"Oh!" cried Rodolphe, seeing Marcel lost in his reverie at the corner of the mantelshelf, "this fire will not catch."

"There, that's it," said the painter, lighting his waste paper under the wood, which began to flare and crackle gloriously, while his friends whetted their appetites with preparations for the meal. Marcel stood thoughtfully apart, and put Musette's letter — which accident had placed in his hands — into a drawer with several other souvenirs of her. All at once he remembered the address of a girl who was an intimate friend of his old love.

"Ah!" he cried, loud enough to be heard, "I know where to find her!"

"Find what?" said Rodolphe. "What are you doing there?" he added, as his friend sat down to write.

"Nothing—only a very particular letter which I had forgotten. I will be with you in an instant," replied Marcel, and he wrote—

"MY DEAR CHILD,—I have money in my secrétaire, a plethora of astounding luck. There is a grand breakfast preparing, good wine, and we have made a fire, my dear, like the well-to-do folks. It is 'a thing to see,' as you once said. Come and spend a minute or two with us. You will find Rodolphe here, Colline and Schaunard. You shall sing us songs at dessert, for there is going to be dessert. Being there, we shall probably remain at table for a week. Don't be afraid, therefore, of being too late. It is so long since I heard your laugh. Rodolphe shall make madrigals for you, and we will drink all sorts of things in memory of our dead loves, independently of their coming to life again. Among people of our sort the last kiss is never the last. Ah! if it had not been so cold last year, perhaps you would not have left me. You were false to me for the sake of a faggot, and because you were afraid of having red hands. You did well. I only want you now for this once for the sake of the others. Come and have a warm while there is still some fire. I embrace you as much as you may desire it. "MARCEL."

This letter finished, Marcel wrote another to Madame Sidonie, Musette's friend, in which he asked her to send on the enclosure addressed to Musette. Then he went downstairs and asked the porter to take the letter and deliver it. As he paid him his fee in advance, the porter caught sight of a piece of gold shining through his fingers, and before starting on his errands he went to the landlord, with whom Marcel was in arrears with his rent.

"Monsieur," he said breathlessly, "the artist on the sixth floor has got some money! You know, the tall fellow who laughs in my face when I take him your accounts."

"Yes," said the landlord, "the man who had the audacity to borrow money of me to give me on account. He has notice to quit."

"Yes, monsieur, but he is covered with gold

to-day. It perfectly dazzled my eyes just now. He is giving entertainments. Now is the time."

"Quite so," said the landlord; "I will go up to him instantly."

Madame Sidonie, who was at home when Marcel's letter was delivered, despatched her maid immediately with the letter for Musette, who occupied charming apartments in the Chaussée d'Antin. She was entertaining company when the letter was handed to her, and in the evening she was going to have a dinner-party."

"Here is a strange thing!" cried Musette, laughing heartily.

"What is it?" asked a handsome young man, straight and stiff as a statuette.

"It is an invitation to dinner," said Musette. "Eh, what do you think of that?"

"I don't think anything of it," said the young man.

"Why?" said Musette.

"What! you don't think of accepting it?"

"I know that I do; you must manage by yourself."

"But, my dear, it is not possible. You must go another time."

"Ah, that's a fine notion that. Another time! It is an old acquaintance, Marcel, who invites me, and it will be such a curious thing for me to meet him again. Another time! Why! real dinners are as rare as eclipses in that house."

"What! you would upset everything to go and see *this* person," said the young man, "and you say it to me?"

"Whom else should I say it to—the great Mogul? What does Marcel care?"

"But really, you are amazingly frank."

"You know very well that I don't do as other people do," replied Musette.

"But what would you think of me if I were to let you go, knowing where you go? Reflect a minute, Musette; for me—for yourself—it would be most inconvenient. You must make your excuses to this young man."

"My dear Monsieur Maurice," said Musette, in very firm tones, "you knew me before you took me. You knew I was full of whims and caprices, and that no creature living could ever boast of making me change my mind."

"Ask me what you please," began Maurice, "but that—no, there are caprices and caprices——"

"Maurice, I am going to Marcel's. I am going," and she fetched her hat and put it on. "You can give me up if you please. His will is stronger than mine. He is the best man in the world, and the only one I have ever loved. If his heart had been made of gold, he would have melted it down to make into rings for me. Poor fellow!" she went on, showing Maurice her letter, "as there is a bit of fire he invites me to come and warm myself! Ah, if he were not so lazy—and there had not been such lovely silks and velvets in the shops! I was very happy with him. He had the power of making me feel, and it was he who gave me the name of Musette, because of my singing. At least, in going to him you know that I shall return to you, unless you shut the door in my face."

"You could not put it more frankly that you don't love me," said the young man.

"Come, come, my dear Maurice, you are a man of too much intelligence for us to engage in serious argument on this subject. You own me like a fine horse in your stable. As for me, I like you—because I like luxury, the noise and stir of concerts and fêtes, everything which has a merry sound and a bright glitter. Don't let us indulge in sentiment. It would be ridiculous and useless."

"At least let me go with you."

"But you wouldn't be at all amused," said Musette, "and you would hinder us from amusing ourselves. Bear in mind that he will kiss me, this young man—inevitably he will."

"Musette," said Maurice, "have you often met with such an accommodating creature as I am?"

"Monsieur le Vicomte," replied Musette, "one day, when I was driving in the Champs Elysées with Lord ——, I saw Marcel and his friend Rodolphe going along on foot, both very shabbily dressed, muddy as sheep-dogs and smoking their pipes. It was three months since I had seen Marcel, and it seemed as if my heart must fly out of the window to him. I stopped the carriage and we chatted together for half an hour before all Paris passing in its fine carriages. Marcel offered me some Nanterre cakes and a bunch of violets he bought for a sou, which I fastened in my waistband. When he went away Lord —— wanted to call him back to ask him to dine with us. I kissed him for thinking of it—and there you have my character, my dear Monsieur Maurice. If it doesn't please

you, you had better say so at once, and I will go and fetch away my slippers and my nightcap."

"It seems as if sometimes it is a good thing to be poor," said Viscount Maurice, in tones weighted with curious sadness.

"Oh no," said Musette, "if Marcel had been rich, I should never have left him."

"Go, then," said the young man, warmly clasping her hand. "You have on your new dress," he added, "which suits you admirably."

"Why, yes, it does. What a lucky chance that it came home this morning! Marcel will have the freshness of it. Adieu!" she added as she went. "I am going to eat a few morsels of the blessed bread of gaiety."

Musette had on a ravishingly exquisite toilette that day. Never had a more seductive cover clothed the poem of her youth and beauty. Musette, in addition to this, instinctively owned the genius for elegance. When she came into the world the first thing her eyes fixed on was a mirror, to see how she looked in her swaddling-clothes; and before she was christened she knew the sin of coquetry. In the days when her position was of the humblest, when her wardrobe still consisted only of print dresses, little bonnets with sarcenet bows, and leather shoes, she wore the simple dress of a work-girl with exquisite grace. Such pretty girls as she, half bees, half grasshoppers, who worked with merry songs on their lips all the week, only asking heaven for a little sunshine on Sundays, made cheap love with all their hearts, and occasionally finished by throwing themselves out of the window. They are a lost race

nowadays, thanks to [illegible] men—a corrupted and corrupting generation, crusted with vanity, stupidity and [illegible] the pleasure of making vile [illegible] at these poor girls because [illegible] with the holy wounds of industrious [illegible] do not earn enough to buy a pot of [illegible] Gradually they have succeeded in inoculating vanity and foolishness, and so the grisette no [illegible] exists. It is thus the *lorette* has come into being, hybrid race of impudent creatures with [illegible] beauty, half flesh, half pomatum, whose boudoirs are counting-houses where they deal out [illegible] morsels of heart as one cuts a slice of beef. The greater part of these girls, who are a disgrace, a blot upon pleasure, and the shame of modern gallantry, have frequently not the intelligence of the creatures whose feathers decorate their bonnets. If it happens by any chance that they have no love affair on hand, not even a fancy, but simply vulgar desire, they crowd after and applaud some comedian of place mime whom the newspapers advertise, by dint of everything ridiculous, by their puffs. Notwithstanding she was forced to live in their [illegible] Musette had not the manners or the tricks of these women; she had none of the servile cupidity of those who can only write figures, and read nothing but Barême. She was an intelligent, proud girl, with some gentle blood in her veins, always rebelling against any sort of restraint or [illegible] she had never resisted any fancy that [illegible] mind, let the consequences be what they might.

Marcel had been the [illegible]

Musette's Whims

He was the only one for whom she had suffered, and it had demanded all the obstinacy of the instincts which had urged her towards "all that glitters, all that shines bright," to draw her away from him. She was twenty, and luxury for her was almost a question of health. She could dispense with it for a time, but she could not renounce it completely. Conscious of her own inconstancy, she had never consented to bind her heart in the chains of sworn fidelity. She had been ardently loved by many for whom she had a real liking, and she always treated them with a circumstantial honesty. The engagements she contracted were simple, frank and rustic as the love declarations of Molière's peasants—"You have an inclination towards me, and I like you. Done, we will be wed." A dozen times, had she wished, Musette might have secured a stable position, such as is called "a future," but she had small faith in futures, entertaining the scepticism of Figaro in regard to them.

"To-morrow," she would say, "is just an almanack absurdity; it is a daily pretext invented by men for not doing their business to-day. To-morrow there may be an earthquake. No time like the present. Really, that is *terra-firma*."

One day a worthy man with whom she had kept company for six months, and who had become madly in love with her, proposed marriage to her. Musette burst into a shout of laughter at the proposition.

"I imprison my freedom in a marriage contract? No!" she said.

"But I pass my life trembling with the fear of losing you."

"You would lose me much sooner if I were your wife," replied Musette. "Don't let us talk more about it. Besides, I am not free," she added, thinking, no doubt, of Marcel.

So her life sped on, her spirit turning to meet all the winds of the unexpected, giving much happiness, and almost happy herself. Viscomte Maurice, with whom she was at present, had a good deal of trouble in accommodating himself to her dauntless nature, so intoxicated with the idea of liberty; and it was with an impatience encrusted with jealousy that he awaited the return of Musette after seeing her leave the house to go to Marcel's.

"Will she stop there?" the young man kept asking himself all the evening, digging the note of interrogation into his heart.

"Poor Maurice!" said Musette on her side. "He found it a trifle rough. Ah, but youth must be educated." Then her mind passed suddenly to other fields and pastures; she thought of Marcel to whom she was hastening, and as she passed in review the memories conjured up by the name of her old admirer, she wondered what miracle had spread his cloth for him. She re-read as she walked, the letter that the artist had sent her, and could not help feeling a little saddened. But that soon passed. Musette thought, with perfect reason, that there was less occasion than ever to be sad, and when just at the moment a gust of wind swept past her, she exclaimed to herself—

"How odd it is! I never go to Marcel's but the wind blows me on there."

And continuing her way, she pressed on gaily as a bird flying home to its own nest. All at once the snow began to fall. Musette looked round in search of a cab. She could not see one. As she found herself in the street in which her friend Madame Sidonie lived, Musette took it into her head to call in on her to wait till the snow had passed over. When Musette entered Madame Sidonie's room she found a large company assembled. They were carrying on a game of lansquenet, begun three days previously.

"Don't disturb yourselves," said Musette. "I am only in and out again."

"You have had Marcel's letter?" whispered Madame Sidonie in her ear.

"Yes," replied Musette, "thank you—I am going to him. He invites me to dinner. Will you come with me? You will enjoy yourself very much."

"Ah, no, I can't," said Sidonie, pointing to the table; "and my turn?" she cried.

"There are six louis," called the banker, who held the cards.

"I make two!" cried Madame Sidonie.

"I am not proud, I bet on two," replied the banker, who had passed several times. "King and ace—I am done," he continued, letting the cards fall. "All the kings are dead."

"No politics," said a journalist.

"And the ace is the foe of my family," concluded the banker, who again turned up a king. "Long

live the King!" cried he. "My dear Sidonie, send me two louis."

"Well, put them down in your memory," said Sidonie, furious at her loss.

"That makes five hundred francs you owe, my dear," said the banker. "You are on the way to a thousand. I pass."

Sidonie and Musette chatted on in low tones; the players continued.

At about the same moment the Bohemians sat down to table. Marcel seemed ill at ease. Each time footsteps sounded on the stairs outside, the others saw him start and tremble.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Rodolphe. "One would think you were expecting somebody. Aren't our numbers complete?"

But a certain glance that the artist cast at him made him understand his friend's perturbation.

"Truly no," he said to himself, "we are not complete."

Marcel's glance signified Musette; Rodolphe's gaze was eloquent of Mimi.

"It wants women," suddenly said Schaunard.

"Good heavens!" thundered Colline. "Can't you be quiet with your libertine ideas? It has been agreed that we will not talk of love. It turns the sauces sour!"

And the friends began to drink larger bumpers, while outside the snow fell and the logs on the hearth crackled and flamed their fireworks.

Just at the instant Rodolphe was trolling the couplet of a song he had found at the bottom of his glass there came knocks at the door.

At the sound, like a diver thrusting with his foot against the bottom to remount to the surface, Marcel, excited by the wine he had drunk, rose hurriedly and rushed to open the door.

It was not Musette.

A gentleman was standing on the threshold. He held a small paper in his hand. His exterior was agreeable, but his dressing-gown was very badly made.

"I find you in good case," he said, glancing at the remains of a huge leg of mutton gracing the middle of the table.

"The landlord," said Rodolphe. "Let us render him the honours which are his due"; and he tapped for order on his plate with his knife and fork.

Colline offered him his chair, and Marcel cried—

"Now then, Schaunard, a glass for the gentleman. You come opportunely," added the artist to the landlord. "We were just about to propose a toast to this establishment. My friend there, Monsieur Colline, was saying some very touching things. Since you are here, he will begin again in honour of your visit. Begin again a little, Colline."

"Excuse me, gentlemen, I do not wish to disturb you"; and he opened the little folded paper in his hand.

"What is this document?" asked Marcel.

The landlord, who had made an inquisitorial tour of the room, had spied out the gold and silver still lying on the mantelpiece.

"It is the account for the rent," he said hurriedly. "I have already had the honour of placing it before you."

"Quite so," said Marcel; "my unerring memory perfectly well recalls the circumstance. It was on a Friday, the eighth of October, at half-past twelve. Very good."

"It bears my signature," said the landlord, "and if it is not inconvenient to you——"

"Monsieur," said Marcel, "I was proposing to myself an interview with you. I have a good deal I wish to say to you."

"I am quite at your service."

"Do me the pleasure, then, of refreshing yourself," continued Marcel, making the man drink another glass of wine. "Monsieur," continued the artist, "you recently sent me a little bit of paper bearing a representation of a lady who is holding a pair of scales. The message on it was signed 'Godard.'"

"That is my bailiff," said the landlord.

"He writes execrably," said Marcel. "My friend there," he went on, indicating Colline, "who is widely acquainted with languages, wanted to translate this document, whose porterage cost five francs."

"It was a notice to quit," said the landlord—"a precautionary measure—the usual——"

"A notice to quit. It was so," said Marcel. "I wished to see you that we might confer together upon this document, which I should desire to convert into a lease. This house pleases me; the staircase is clean, the street is very cheerful, and then family reasons — a thousand things attach me to these walls."

"But," said the landlord, fingering his account, "there is the last quarter to settle for."

"We will settle it, monsieur; that is my fullest intention."

Nevertheless, the landlord did not take his eyes from the mantelshelf where the money lay, and the fixity of his looks, filled with acquisitiveness, was so great that the pieces almost seemed to be rising up and moving towards him.

"I am fortunate to have arrived at a moment when it does not inconvenience you. We can bring the little matter to an agreeable conclusion," he said, handing the account to Marcel, who, no longer able to parry the attack, changed his tactics and recommenced with the scene of Don Juan with Monsieur Dimanche.

"You have, I believe," he said, "estates in the country?"

"Oh," said the landlord, "very little of that. A small house in Burgundy—a farm worth little enough. Poor connection; farmers don't pay. And as to this," he added, still holding out his bill, "it will come in very handy. It is sixty francs, as you are aware——"

"Sixty. Yes," said Marcel, making his way to the chimney-piece, from which he took three pieces of gold, "let us say sixty." And he placed the three pieces on the table at some distance from the landlord.

"At last!" murmured he, with a brightening countenance, and he laid his paper on the table.

Schaunard, Colline and Rodolphe looked on with disturbed gaze.

"Monsieur," said Marcel, "since you are a Burgundian you will not refuse to speak a few words to

a compatriot"; and sending the cork flying from a bottle of old Mâcon, he poured out a bumper of it for the landlord.

"Ah, perfection!" said he, smacking his lips; "I never tasted finer."

"I have an uncle living down that way, and he sends me a basket or two of it now and again."

The landlord rose, stretching out his hand towards the money, but Marcel stopped him again.

"You will not refuse to pledge me once again," he said, filling the glass again and forcing his creditor to clink glasses with him and the three other Bohemians.

The landlord dared not refuse. He drank again, put down his glass, and was about to take up the money, when Marcel said—

"A moment, monsieur; I have an idea. I find myself a little in funds just now; my Burgundy uncle has sent me a supplement to my income. I am afraid of wasting this money. Youth, you know, is giddy. If you do not object, I will pay you in advance"; and counting sixty more francs from the silver money, he added them to the louis on the table.

"In that case I will give you a receipt to the date of expiry. I have a blank form in my pocket," added the landlord, taking out his pocket-book. "I will fill it in and duly date it. What a delightful man this lodger!" thought Marcel's creditor, devouring the hundred and twenty francs with his eyes.

At this proposition the three Bohemians, who did not grasp Marcel's diplomacy, stared blankly.

"But this chimney smokes. It is exceedingly inconvenient," said Marcel.

"Why have you not told me of it? I would have sent for the sweep," said the landlord, who would not be wanting in anything on his part. "I will order the workmen." And having finished filling up the second receipt form, he put it with the other, and pushing both of them in front of Marcel he stretched his hand once more towards the heap of silver. "You cannot conceive how opportunely this money comes in. I have bills to pay for repair of fixtures, and I was in great embarrassment."

"I regret having made you wait," said Marcel.

"Oh, I was not in distress, gentlemen. I have the honour——," and his fingers began clawing again.

"Ah! ah! allow me!" said Marcel. "We are not at the end of it yet. You know the saying, 'When the wine is poured out——'?" and he replenished the landlord's glass.

"One must drink."

"Quite right," smiled the creditor, sitting down again out of politeness.

A glance from Marcel now made it clear to the others what his intention was.

The landlord began to talk the most extraordinary rubbish. He tilted himself back in his chair, making extravagant promises to Marcel concerning the embellishments of his room.

"Now forward with the big artillery," said the artist in an undertone to Rodolphe, pointing to a bottle of rum.

After the first little glass of it the landlord sang a

ditty that made Schaunard blush. After the second little glass he related his conjugal misfortunes, and as his wife's name was Helen he compared himself to Menelaus. After the third little glass he had an access of philosophy, and fired off aphorisms of this nature—

"Life is a river."

"Fortune does not make happiness."

"Man is ephemeral."

"Ah, love is agreeable."

And taking Schaunard for his confidant, he recounted to him a clandestine affair he had with a young girl he had put in clover who was called Euphémie; and he painted such an accurate word-portrait of this young person, who was so full of ingenuous tenderness, that strange suspicions began to cross Schaunard's mind, and they assumed definite shape when the landlord showed him a letter which he drew from his pocket-book.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Schaunard, recognising the signature. "Cruel girl! What daggers you drive into my heart!"

"What is the matter?" cried the Bohemians, startled by his exclamations.

"Look!" said Schaunard; "this letter is from Phémie. "See the smudge which serves for signature," and he handed on the letter of his former sweetheart. It began thus—

"My Dear Big Louf-Louf,—"

"It is I who am her *louf-louf,*" said the landlord, as he tried to get up from his chair without succeeding.

"All right!" said Marcel. "He has cast anchor."

"Phémie! Cruel Phémie!" murmured Schaunard. "What suffering you cause me!"

"I have furnished a little room for her at number 12, Rue Coquenard," went on the landlord. "She is pretty, very pretty. It cost me a lot of money, but true love knows nothing of money, and I have an income of twenty thousand francs. She asks me for money," he continued, taking back his letter. "Poor darling! I am going to give it her. It will please her," and he stretched out his hands towards Marcel's little pile. "Dear me! Dear me!" he went on in puzzled tones, feeling all over the table. "Where is it?"

The money had disappeared.

"It is impossible to conceive that a man of honour should lend himself to such doings," said Marcel. "My conscience! Morality forbids me to pour the price of my earnings into the hands of this old debauchee; I will not pay my rent, and my soul will not know remorse on that account. What conduct! A bald-headed old fellow like that!"

The landlord continued to maunder on, and addressed his discourse mainly to the bottles. As he had been away quite two hours, his wife, uneasy about him, sent her servant to see after him. She began to scream when she saw him.

"What have you been doing to my master?" she demanded of the Bohemians.

"Nothing," said Marcel. "He came up here a little while ago to ask for his rent; as we had no money to give him we asked him for time."

"But he is drunk," said the servant.

"The greater part of that business had been done when he came," replied Rodolphe. "He told us that he had been putting his wine-cellars in order."

"And he was so careless," continued Colline, "that he was going to leave us the receipts without the money."

"You had better give them to his wife," added the painter, handing the maid the receipts. "We are honest persons, and we do not want to profit by his condition."

"Oh, good gracious! What will my mistress say!" said the servant, clutching at her master, who could not stand steady on his legs, as she dragged him out.

"At last!" cried Marcel.

"He will come back to-morrow," said Rodolphe. "He saw the money."

"When he comes back," said the artist, "I shall threaten him with informing his wife of his relations with Mademoiselle Phémie, and then he will give us time."

When the landlord was well away from the place the four friends began to drink and smoke. Only Marcel kept something of a clear head. Every moment, at the slightest sound of footsteps on the stairs, he kept running to open the door; but the people coming up always turned in at the doors of the landings below, and the artist returned slowly back to his corner of the fireplace. Midnight struck, and Musette had not come.

"Ah, well," thought Marcel, "perhaps she was not in when my letter was delivered. She will find it this evening on her return home, and she will

come to-morrow. It is not possible that she will refuse to come. And so till to-morrow." And he settled himself to sleep in his corner by the fire.

Just at the time Marcel was falling asleep dreaming of her Musette was leaving Madame Sidonie's house, where she had remained all day. Musette was not alone; she was accompanied by a young man. A cab was at the door, and they both got in. The cab went off at a sharp pace.

Madame Sidonie's party of lansquenet continued.

"Where is Musette?" suddenly cried someone.

"Yes, and where is little Séraphin?" said another.

Madame Sidonie began to laugh.

"They have gone off together," she said. "Ah, it is a curious story! What a strange creature Musette is! Only fancy——"

And she told them all. How Musette, after nearly having a rupture with Vicomte Maurice, started to go to Marcel, and having looked in upon her on the way had met young Séraphin.

"Ah, I suspected something of it," said Sidonie, breaking off in the middle of her tale. "I have been watching them all the evening. He is no fool, this little fellow. In short," she continued, "they went off without a word of warning, and who stops them will be clever. But it is very odd, when one thinks how Musette adores her Marcel."

"If she so adores him, what is the good of Séraphin? He is almost a child. He has never had a sweetheart," said a young man.

"She wants to teach him to read," said a

journalist who always talked nonsense when he had lost.

"Yes," said Sidonie, "since she loves Marcel, why Séraphin? It passes my comprehension."

Alas! yes, why?

* * * * *

For five days, without leaving the house, the Bohemians spent a rare time of it. All day long they feasted. An admirable disorder prevailed in the room, which acquired a Pantagruelic aspect. Upon a bank of oyster-shells lay an army of bottles of all shapes and sizes. The table was strewn with débris of all kinds, and a forest of wood flamed up the chimney. On the sixth day Colline, who was master of the ceremonies, revised, as he did every morning, the programme for breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper, submitting it to the approval of his friends, each of them affixing his signature in token of acquiescence. But when one morning Colline opened the cash drawer to take out the necessary amount for the day's expenditure, he stepped back with a startled air, and grew pale as Banquo's ghost.

"What is the matter?" carelessly asked the others.

"The matter is that there are only thirty sous left," said the philosopher.

"Oh, the devil! the devil!" cried the others.

"We must make amendments in the programme."

"Well, thirty sous is something, but we shall scarcely get truffles."

A few minutes later the table was laid. Three dishes were ranged symmetrically upon it—

A dish of herrings.

A dish of potatoes.

A dish of cheese.

Two small logs, about as big as a fist, burned in the grate.

Outside the snow was still falling heavily. The four Bohemians sat down to table, gravely opening their serviettes.

"It is curious," said Marcel, "this herring has quite the flavour of pheasant."

"That comes from the style in which I have arranged it on the dish," said Colline; "the mere herring would have been despised."

At that instant a merry song came up the stairs, and a tap sounded on the door. Marcel, trembling from head to foot, ran to open it.

Musette sprang to his breast, and hung about his neck for ever so long. Marcel felt her whole frame trembling in his embrace.

"What is the matter?" asked he.

"I am cold," she said mechanically, as she crossed to the hearth.

"Ah," said Marcel, "and we made such a nice fire."

"Yes," said Musette, gazing round at the remains of the banquet which had lasted so many days, "I have come too late."

"Why have you?" said Marcel.

"Why?" said Musette, reddening a little as she seated herself on Marcel's knee, still trembling, and her hands purple with cold.

"Weren't you free to come?" whispered Marcel in her ear.

"I not free!" cried the girl. "Ah, Marcel, I might be seated among the stars in paradise, and if you beckoned to me to come to you I would come. I not free!" And again she shivered.

"There are five chairs here," said Rodolphe. "It is an odd number, without counting in the ridiculous shape of the fifth." And breaking up the chair against the wall, he threw the pieces in the fire. The flames broke into clear, joyous brilliancy; then, making signs to Colline and Schaunard, the poet dragged them away with him out of the room.

"Where are you going?" asked Marcel.

"To buy tobacco," replied they.

"Havana," added Schaunard, with a wink of intelligence at Marcel, who thanked him by a look.

"Why did you not come sooner?" he asked Musette again when they found themselves alone.

"To be sure, I am a little late."

"Five days for getting across the Pont Neuf. You must have taken the road by the Pyrenees!" said Marcel.

Musette hung her head, and remained silent.

"Ah, naughty girl," sadly went on Marcel, lightly tapping his finger on her breast, "what have you got in there?"

"You know well enough," quickly replied she.

"But what have you been doing since I wrote to you?"

"Don't ask me!" she hurriedly replied, embracing him again and again. "Don't ask me anything. Only let me warm myself here beside you while it is cold. You see, I have put on my prettiest gown to come. Poor Maurice, he couldn't under-

stand it at all when I left him to come here; but—it was stronger than I—and—I started to come. That is nice. This fire——" She broke off, stretching her little hands over the flame. "I will stay with you till to-morrow. Will you like me to do so?"

"It will be very cold here," said Marcel, "and we have nothing for dinner. You have come too late," he said again.

"Ah, nonsense!" said Musette. "That will only be like the old days."

* * * * *

Rodolphe, Colline and Schaunard stopped away twenty-four hours buying their tobacco. When they returned Marcel was alone, and after being a week away, Viscount Maurice saw Musette back again.

He did not reproach her in any way; he only asked her why she seemed so sad.

"I quarrelled with Marcel," she said. "We parted in anger."

"Nevertheless," said Maurice, "you will return to him one of these days."

"What if I do?" cried Musette. "I need to breathe the air of that kind of life from time to time. My foolish existence is like a song. Each of my love affairs is a couplet — but Marcel is its refrain."

XX

MIMI HAS FEATHERS

I

"OH! no, no, no, you are no longer Lisette. Oh! no, no, no, you are no longer Mimi.

"You are now Madame la Vicomtesse; in due time you will be Madame la Duchesse, for you have set foot on the rungs of the ladder of greatness; the door of your dreams has at last been flung wide open to you, and here you are entering victorious and triumphant. I was sure it would end like this for you one day or other. It was bound to be so; your white hands were made for idleness, and have long called for the ring of an aristocratic alliance. Now you have a coat of arms! But we preferred the one which youth gave your beauty, which with your pale face and blue eyes seemed like gleams of azure upon a bed of lilies. Noble or lowly, there—you are always charming, and I readily recognised you when you passed me the other evening in the street, with your fleet feet so exquisitely shod, helping the wind with your gloved hand to lift the flounces of your new dress, partly to protect them from the mud, much more to allow your fine silk stockings and your embroidered petticoats to be seen. You had an enchanting hat, and you were lost in profound study of the matter of arranging your beautiful lace veil. A

serious matter indeed, for it took in the consideration whether it better became you to wear the veil lowered or lifted. In wearing it down you risked not being recognised by any friends you might meet, who undoubtedly might have passed you a dozen times without being aware that the rich lace was hiding Mademoiselle Mimi from sight. On the other hand, wearing the veil raised risked its beauty being hidden, and then what was the use of it? You skilfully split the difficulty by lowering and lifting alternately, every few steps you took, the marvellous fabric woven seemingly in that country of the Arachnida called Flanders, which cost alone more than all your entire collection of raiment in old days. Ah, Mimi—pardon me—ah, Madame la Vicomtesse, I was quite right, you see, when I said to you, 'Patience, do not despair; the future is big with cashmeres, jewels, little suppers, etcetera.' You would not believe me, you incredulous child. Well, my predictions are realised nevertheless, and I am as good as *The Ladies' Oracle*, the little book of magic which you bought for five sous at the Pont Neuf bookstall, whose pages you thumbed to death with your never-ending studies. Once again, was I not right in my prophecies, and will you believe me now if I tell you that you will not stop there? If I told you that, listening carefully, I already hear softly in the distance of your future the neighing and clatter of horses harnessed to a blue carriage, driven by powdered coachmen, and attended by a footman who says, as he spreads the carpet under your feet, 'Where to, madame?' Will you believe me if I also tell you that later—ah! as late as possible—

great Heaven! attaining the height of an ambition you have long cherished, you will hold a table at Belleville or Batignolles, and you will be courted by elderly military gentlemen and hoary-headed profligates who will come to play clandestine baccarat and lansquenet under your roof? But before arriving at this period, when the sunshine of your youth is fading, believe me, dear child, you will use many and many a yard of silk and of velvet, many a patrimony will be melted in the crucibles of your caprices, many a flower will fade upon your brow, many a one beneath your feet. Many a time you will change your coat of arms: by turns the wreath of a baroness, the crown of a countess, and the diadem of a marchioness. Your device will be 'Inconstancy,' and you will know how to please all in turn, or even at the same time, according to caprice or necessity, these numerous adorers who will come in file into the ante-chamber of your heart, as they make a queue at theatre doors where a popular piece is being played.

"Go forward, then, go forward, your spirit disburdened of memories which are replaced by ambitions; go on, the way is beautiful and we wish it pleasant to your feet; but above all we wish that all these riches and this luxury, these splendid toilettes, do not become too soon the shroud of your heart's gaiety."

In this fashion spoke the painter Marcel to young Mlle. Mimi whom he chanced to meet some few days after her second divorce from the poet Rodolphe. Although she was compelled to smile at the railleries of the horoscope he drew, Mimi was not duped by the words he uttered, and perfectly compre-

hended that, entertaining little respect for her new grandeur, he was mocking her bitterly.

"You are disagreeable to me, Marcel," said Mimi. "It is too bad of you. I was always nice to you when I was Rodolphe's sweetheart, and if I have left him it is all his fault. It is he who sent me away, and then how did he treat me, pray, during the last few days of my stay with him? I was very miserable. There, you don't know what Rodolphe is! His nature is a petrifaction of irritability and jealousy, which was killing me by inches. He loved me, I know, well enough, but his love was as dangerous as a firearm, and what an existence I led with him for fifteen months! Ah, Marcel, I don't want to make myself out better than I am, but I have cruelly suffered with Rodolphe, you know I have. It is not poverty which has parted us. No, indeed it is not. I was used to that, and, moreover, I repeat it, it was he who sent me away. He has trampled on my feelings; he said I had no heart if I stayed on with him; he told me he loved me no longer, that I must find another sweetheart; he even went so far as to mention the name of a young man who was offering me his attentions, and by his conduct he was the means of bringing me and the young man together. I went to him more out of spite than necessity, for I did not care for him; you know well enough that I have no liking for such young persons; they bore one, and are as sentimental as musical glasses. And now what is done is done, and I don't regret it, and I should do it again if it had to be done. Now that he no longer has me with him, and

knows that I am happy with another, Rodolphe is furious and unhappy. I know someone who has recently met him. His eyes were red. I am not surprised. I was sure it would be like that, and that he would be running after me, but you can tell him that it would be only his pains wasted, and that this time all is over now and for ever. Is it long since you have seen him, Marcel, and is it true that he is so much changed?" added Mimi in another key.

"Very much changed, indeed," replied Marcel. "Cruelly changed."

"He is miserable, that is certain, but what would you have me do? All the worse for him. It was his wish, he wanted an end to it all. You must manage to console him."

"Oh, oh!" quickly said Marcel, "the greater part of that need is met. Don't let that disturb you, Mimi."

"You are not telling the truth, my dear," said Mimi, with a little ironical pout. "Rodolphe would not console himself so quickly as that. If you knew what a state he was in the day I went away! It was on a Friday. I would not stay that night with my new sweetheart because I am superstitious, and Friday is an unlucky day."

"You are wrong, Mimi. In love Friday is a lucky day. '*Dies Veneris*,' the ancients said."

"I don't know Latin," continued Mlle. Mimi. "I left Paul, and I found Rodolphe waiting like a sentinel for me at the corner of the street. It was late, after midnight, and I was hungry. I asked Rodolphe to go and get me something for my supper.

He came back after being away half an hour; he had run about a good deal to get me in the end nothing very wonderfully good—bread, wine, sardines, cheese and an apple tart. I had gone to bed during his absence; he put the table with the things beside the bed. I pretended not to see him, but I saw him well enough. He was as pale as death, he was shaking all over, and he went about the room like a man who doesn't know what he is doing. In one corner there were some parcels of my things done up ready for taking away. The sight of them seemed to upset him, and he drew the screen before them to hide them. He tried to make me drink when we began to eat the supper, but I was neither hungry nor thirsty, and my heart seemed all shrivelled up. It was cold, for there was nothing to make a fire with; we heard the wind whistling in the chimney. It was very wretched. Rodolphe looked at me; his eyes were fixed. He put his hand in mine, and I could feel it trembling; it was hot and cold by turns.

"'It is the funeral supper of our loves,' he said in a low voice to me.

"I did not answer, but I had not the courage to draw away my hand. 'I am sleepy,' I said to him at last. 'It is late, let us sleep.' Rodolphe looked at me. I had wrapped one of his neck-handkerchiefs round my head to keep the cold out; he took off the handkerchief without speaking a word. 'Why do you take that off?' I asked him. 'I am cold.'

"'Oh, Mimi!' he said then. 'Please—I entreat you—it won't cost you anything; put on—for to-night—your little striped cap.'

"It was a cap made of striped white and brown cotton. Rodolphe always liked to see me in this cap, it reminded him of happy times. Reflecting that it was for the last time, I did not dare to refuse his whim. I got up and went to find my striped cap, which was at the bottom of one of my packages. Inadvertently I neglected to replace the screen. Rodolphe, observing this, put it back himself, hiding the packages as he had done before.

"'Good night,' said he.

"'Good night,' I answered. I thought he was going to kiss me, and I should not have refused him, but he only took my hand and carried it to his lips. You know, Marcel, how fond he is of kissing my hands. I heard his teeth chatter, and he was as cold as marble. He kept tight hold of my hand, and he had laid his head on my shoulder, which was soon wet with his tears. Rodolphe was in a fearful state; he strove to stifle his sobs with the coverlet, but I could hear, and I felt his tears raining on my shoulder, first burning, then freezing it. I had need of all my courage then, and it nearly failed me. I had only to say the words, only to turn my head, my lips would have met his, and once again we should have made it up. Ah! once I really thought he would have died in my arms, or that he would have gone mad, as once before he almost did, don't you remember? I was going to give in, I felt I was. I should have been first to yield; I was about to take him in my arms, for one would really have been destitute of a soul to remain insensible to such anguish; but I remembered his words the night before, 'You are heartless if you stay with me, for I love you no longer.' Ah,

recalling these harsh words, I saw him almost die beside me. I might have turned my lips to his, and I might have seen him die. At last, overcome with fatigue, I fell half asleep. I heard him still sobbing, and, Marcel, he sobbed all night; and when daylight broke, and I looked at this lover I was leaving for the arms of another, it was frightful to see the ravages his sufferings had made in his face.

"He got up as I had done, without a word, and almost fell at the first steps he took, he was so weak and broken down. He dressed himself, however, quickly enough, and only asked me which way I was going and when I should go. I replied that I did not know. He went out without saying good-bye, without shaking hands. That is how we parted. What a blow it must have been for him when he returned and found me gone! Eh?"

"I was there when Rodolphe came back," said Marcel as Mimi ceased, quite out of breath with talking so long. "As the porter's wife gave him his key she said—

"'The little woman is gone.' 'Ah,' said Rodolphe, 'that does not surprise me. I expected it,' and he went upstairs to his room, where I followed him, fearing some outburst, but nothing happened. 'As it is too late to go and look for another room to-night,' he said to me, 'we will do it together to-morrow morning. Let us go now and have dinner.' I thought he would drink too much, but I was wrong. We had a very quiet dinner in a restaurant where you went with him to dine sometimes. I ordered Beaune to cheer him up a bit. 'It was Mimi's favourite wine,' he said. 'We have often

drunk it together at this very table where we are sitting. I remember one day she said to me, holding out her glass which she had emptied more than once, "Fill it again. It puts *balm* into my heart." It was not a very brilliant mot, do you think?—worthy of a vaudeville scribbler. Ah! she drank bravely, did Mimi.' Seeing him inclined to drop away into the paths of old memories, I began to talk to him of other things, and there was no further mention of you. He passed all the evening with me, and seemed as calm as the Mediterranean. What most amazed me was that there was no affectation in his composure. It was sincere indifference. Towards midnight we returned home.

"'You seem surprised at my calmness in the situation in which I am placed,' he said to me. 'Let me make you a comparison, my dear fellow, and if it is commonplace, it at least has the merit of being apt. My heart is like a fountain which has been allowed to play all night: in the morning it has not a single drop left in it.

"'So is my heart. I wept away that night all the tears I had left. It is strange, but I thought I had more feeling in me, and by a night of suffering I am quite run dry. On my word of honour it is so, and here, where last night my very soul seemed about to render itself up for a woman who stirred no more than a stone—since that woman now rests her head upon another's heart—I shall sleep like a porter who has done a big day's work.'

"'All put on,' I thought to myself. 'I shall no sooner be gone than he will be battering his head against the walls.' However, I left him alone and

returned to my own room, but I did not go to bed. About three o'clock in the morning I thought I heard a noise in Rodolphe's room. I hurried down, expecting to find him stricken with some terrible fever——"

"Well?" said Mimi.

"Well, my dear, Rodolphe was asleep, the bedclothes were smooth, and everything testified to his slumber being calm, and that it had come to him quickly."

"That is possible," said Mimi. "He was so tired out with the previous night. But the next day?"

"The next day Rodolphe came and woke me early, and we went out to find apartments in some other place, where we went that same evening."

"And," demanded Mimi, "what did he do when he left the room we occupied? What did he say as he was leaving the place where he had so loved me?"

"He packed up calmly," replied Marcel, "and having found in a drawer a pair of thread gloves you had left behind you, as well as two or three letters of yours——"

"I know," said Mimi, in tones which seemed to say, 'I forgot them on purpose, so that he might have some remembrance of me.' "What did he do with them?" she added.

"I think," said Marcel, "that he threw the letters into the grate and the gloves out of the window; but not with romantic gestures, without any show-off—very naturally, as one might do when one gets rid of rubbish."

"My dear Monsieur Marcel, I assure you that to the bottom of my heart I hope this indifference will last; but there again, most sincerely I do not believe in such a rapid cure, and in spite of all you tell me I am convinced that my poet's heart is broken."

"It may be so," replied Marcel, as he parted from Mimi. "Still, if I do not greatly mistake, the pieces are in very good case."

While this colloquy was taking place in the public street Monsieur le Vicomte Paul was waiting for his new sweetheart, who was terribly late and made herself exceedingly disagreeable to Monsieur le Vicomte. He stretched himself at her feet and chanted her favourite theme—that is to say that she was charming, pale as the moon, gentle as a lamb, but that he loved her above all for the loveliness of her soul.

"Ah!" thought Mimi, as she let the waves of her brown hair roll down on her snowy shoulders, "my friend Rodolphe was not so superfine."

II

As Marcel had said, Rodolphe appeared to be radically cured of his love for Mlle. Mimi, and three or four days after his separation from her the poet reappeared completely metamorphosed. He was attired with an elegance which rendered him almost unrecognisable by his own mirror. Nothing about him in short afforded room for any fear that it was his intention to cast himself into the depths of nothingness. Mlle. Mimi had spread the report that this

seemed possible, adding thereto all sorts of hypocritical expressions of regret. Rodolphe was perfectly calm; he listened, without a line of his face disturbing itself, to the tales told of the new and luxurious life led by his old sweetheart, who was pleased to let them be circulated by a young woman who was her friend and confidante, and who happened to see Rodolphe nearly every evening.

"Mimi was very happy with Vicomte Paul," this woman told the poet; "he seemed desperately in love with her. Only one thing troubles her—she is afraid of your upsetting her by coming after her, which would, moreover, be dangerous for you, for the Vicomte adores his mistress and has had two years' fencing practice!"

"Oh, oh!" said Rodolphe, "let her sleep quite in peace. I have no desire to go and drop vinegar into her honeymoon. As to her young lover, he may safely leave his dagger hanging upon its nail, like Gastebelza, the man with the carbine. I should not wish otherwise in connection with a gentleman who has still the happiness of being at nurse with his illusions." And as there was no lack of reports to Mimi of the spirit in which her former sweetheart received the particulars of her present welfare, she, on her part, did not forget to reply with a shrug.

"Oh, very well, very well. We shall see, one of these days, how all that turns out."

Notwithstanding this, and more than anyone else, Rodolphe was greatly astonished at his own sudden indifference, which, without passing through the ordinary phases of sadness and melancholy, came direct upon the violent tempests which had agitated

him but a few days before. Forgetfulness is slow in coming, above all to those bereft of love—forgetfulness which they call loudly for, and as loudly repel when they feel its approach; that pitiless consoler had suddenly with one blow, and without his being able to defend himself, invaded Rodolphe's heart, and the name of her he had so loved was never again to waken an echo there. Strange that Rodolphe, whose memory was so strong in its power of recalling things which had happened in the most remote days of his past years, and the beings who had moulded or had influenced his existence no matter how far back—Rodolphe, after four days of separation, let him strive as he would, was unable distinctly to recall the features of this girl who had been able to hold his very life in her slender hands; in the eyes whose radiance had so often soothed him he no longer saw any sweetness; of that voice itself, whose petulance or whose tenderness filled him with delusions of happiness, he could not recall the tones. A poet friend, who had not seen him since his sundering from Mimi, met him one evening. Rodolphe appeared busy and anxious as he strode along the street flourishing his cane about.

"Ah," said the poet, holding out his hand, "there you are"; and he gazed with curiosity at Rodolphe.

Seeing that he had a long face, he thought it was right to speak in a consolatory key.

"Come, courage, my dear fellow! I know it was hard, but it must have come to that some day. Better now than later. In three months' time the cure will be complete."

"What are you talking about?" said Rodolphe. "I am not ill, my friend."

"Oh, hang it!" said the other, "you needn't try to brazen it out. I know the whole affair, and if not I should be able to read it now in your face."

"Mind, you are making a *quid pro quo,*" said Rodolphe. "I am worried this evening, to be sure, but as to the cause of the worry, you haven't quite put your finger on the right spot."

"Ah, why excuse yourself? It is all natural enough. An affair like that, which has lasted nearly two years, is not broken up so easily."

"Everybody tells me the same thing," said Rodolphe impatiently. "But on my honour, you are quite mistaken—you and everyone. I am profoundly miserable and doubtless look it, but why I am so is because my tailor was to bring me home a new coat, and it has not come. That, that is why I am so wretched."

"Bad, bad," said the other, laughing.

"Not bad; good. On the contrary, very good. Excellent even. Follow my argument, and you will see."

"Well," said the poet, "I am listening to you. "Prove to me how one can reasonably wear such a melancholy exterior because a tailor fails to keep his word. Go on, go on; I am waiting."

"Ah, well," said Rodolphe, "you know little causes are productive of great effects. I wanted to pay a very important visit this evening, and I am not able to do it because I haven't my coat. You follow me?"

"No, the motive does not suffice for the wretched-

ness. You are miserable—because—no, you are too stupid to make pretences to me. There you have my opinion."

"My friend," said Rodolphe, "you are very obstinate. There is always a foundation of wretchedness where happiness or even pleasure is wanting, because it is almost always so much loss, and one cannot always say which of the two it may be. I will go into that with you another time. I resume. I had a rendezvous this evening with a lady. I was to meet her at a house whence I might have conducted her to mine, if it had been shorter than for me to go to her house, or even if it had been longer. In this house there was an evening party to be given. To an evening party one can only go in a dress suit. I have not a dress suit; my tailor should have brought me one. He did not bring it. I do not go to the soirée. I do not meet the lady, whose favour is, perhaps, being sought by another. I neither take her to my house nor go to hers. Therefore, as I told you, I miss a happiness or a pleasure; therefore I am wretched; therefore I appear so; and it is all natural enough."

"Granted," said the friend; "therefore, having drawn one foot out of one hell, you plunge the other into a fresh one. But, my good friend, when I met you just now you looked as if you were waiting for someone."

"I was doing so."

"But," continued the other, "we are in the quarter where your old sweetheart lives. What will prove to me that you were not waiting for her?"

"Although we have parted, particular reasons

compel me to remain in this neighbourhood; but although we are neighbours, we are as far off from each other as if the poles sundered us. Besides, at this time of day my former mistress is sitting by the fire taking lessons in grammar with Monsieur le Vicomte Paul, who wishes to lead her into the paths of virtue by the way of orthography. Heavens, how he will spoil her! However, that is his business now that he is her ruler-in-chief. You see, therefore, that your views were absurd, and that instead of being on the obliterated tracks of my old passion, I am on those of the new, who is already a neighbour of mine, and will become still more intimate, for I agree to take the necessary steps, and, if she will take the rest, we shall not be long in understanding each other."

"Really," said the poet, "you are in love already?"

"I am," replied Rodolphe; "my heart is like those apartments that are put up to let directly the former lodger quits them. When one love leaves my heart I put up the notice for another. The place is habitable and in perfect repair."

"And who is the new divinity? Where did you find her—and when?"

"Ah," said Rodolphe, "let us go step by step. When Mimi left me I thought I should never in all my life be in love again, and I fancied my heart was dead with fatigue, exhaustion, — what you please. It had throbbed so long, so fast — too fast, that it was incredible. In brief, I believed it to be dead, quite dead, and I thought, like Marlborough, I would bury it. In honour of this

occasion I invited some of my friends to a little funeral dinner. The guests were to put on mournful visages, and the bottles were to have crape round their necks."

"You did not invite me."

"Forgive me, but I did not know the exact situation of the cloud you live in. One of my guests brought a lady, a young woman forsaken by her lover. They told her my story; one of my friends related it—a fellow who plays very well upon the violin of sentiment. He talked to this young woman of the qualities of my heart, the poor corpse they had assembled to bury, and invited her to drink to its eternal repose.

"'No,' she said, lifting her glass, 'on the contrary, I will drink to its health,' and she cast a glance at me, a glance to waken a dead man, as they say, and then was the time or never to say it, for she had not uttered her toast before I felt my heart singing the 'O Filii' of the Resurrection. What would you have done in my place?"

"A fine question! What is her name?"

"I don't know yet. I shall not ask her name till the moment when we sign our contract. I know well enough that, in the opinion of some, I am not within statutable limitations. I am my own solicitor, and I can settle the costs with myself. What I do know is that my future sweetheart brings me a dowry of gaiety, which is the health of the mind, and of health, which is the gaiety of the body."

"Is she pretty?"

"Very pretty—in complexion, at all events. One

would say that she washed herself of a morning from Watteau's palette.

"'My sweetheart is fair,
And her conquering darts
Set fire to all hearts.'

Witness mine."

"She is fair? You astonish me."

"Yes, I have had enough of ebony and ivory. I turn to the blonde"; and Rodolphe began to sing and caper.

"'We will sing if you will
To the girl I adore;
She is fair as Aurore
Or the wheat in the field.'"

"Poor Mimi!" said the friend. "So soon forgotten!"

The name flung into the midst of Rodolphe's gaiety gave a turn to the conversation. Rodolphe took his friend by the arm and told him a long tale of the causes of his rupture with Mlle. Mimi, the terrible loneliness seizing him when she left him, how miserable he was because he thought she had taken away with her all that remained to him of youth and of passion, and how two days later he had seen his mistake in feeling the chords of his heart, softened by the flow of sobs and tears, gather warmth, and kindle and break into flame under the first passionate glances cast at him by the first woman he had met. He told his friend of this sudden and despotic conquest forgetfulness had gained without his even having appealed to his old sorrow for protection against it, and how this sorrow was dead, shrouded in oblivion.

"Isn't it all marvellous?" he said to the poet,

who, knowing from his own heart and experience all the sufferings of wounded and crushed-out love, replied—

"No, no, my friend, there is no more of the marvellous in it for you than for others. What has happened to you has happened to me. The women we love, when they become our mistresses, cease to be for us what they really are. We see them only with lovers' eyes; we see them, also, with poets' eyes. Just as a painter clothes a dummy in imperial purple or the Madonna's starry veil, we have always shining robes and snowy raiment to cast about creatures who are unintelligent, bad, wicked; and when they are clothed in the garments in which our ideal loves passed into the azure depths of our dreams, we allow them to wear this disguise, we incarnate our dream in the person of the first woman to whom we speak our language, and she does not comprehend it.

"This creature herself, nevertheless, at whose feet we prostrate ourselves, tears away the glorious garments in which we have clothed her, the better for us to see her corrupt nature and her low instincts; nevertheless, she puts her hand on the place where her heart should be, where there is no longer a throb, perhaps where never has been life. She nevertheless draws aside her veil and discloses her dim eyes and her pale lips and her withered features. We drag back the veil in its place, and we cry to ourselves, 'Thou liest! thou liest! I love thee and thou lovest me. This white bosom covers a heart which is young. I love thee and thou lovest me. Thou art beautiful, thou art young.

Beneath all thy vices there is love. I love thee, and thou lovest me!'

"Then at last, oh! always in the end, after having bound our eyes with triple bandages, we perceive that we are ourselves the dupes of our own error. We send away the unhappy being which but yesterday was our idol; we drag off from her the golden veil of our poetry, which next day we throw about the shoulders of some unknown creature, who passes at once to the throne of the glorified idol. And that is what we all are, monstrous egotists, who love love for love's sake—you understand me, don't you?—and we quaff the divine drink in the first glass that comes to hand.

"'What matters the glass
If ecstasy reigns.'"

"It is as true as two and two make four, what you say," said Rodolphe to the poet.

"Yes," replied he, "it is as true and sad as the half-and-half of all truths. Good night."

Two days later Mimi learned that Rodolphe had a new mistress. She only asked one thing, which was if he caressed her hands as often as he used to do hers.

"Quite as often," said Marcel. "Moreover, he kisses each hair one after the other, and they ought to remain faithful till he has finished."

"Ah!" said Mimi, passing her fingers through her hair, "it is lucky he did not think of doing that with me; we should have remained together all our lives. Do you think that it is really true that he no longer loves me one bit?"

"Ah, rubbish! And do you still love him?"

"I? I never loved him."

"Yes, Mimi; yes you did love him. In those days when the heart of woman is yielding you loved him, and do not deny it, for it is your justification."

"Ah, nonsense!" said Mimi. "He loves another woman now."

"That is true," said Marcel, "but it will not interfere. Later your memory will be for him like the flowers that one places all fresh and fragrant between the leaves of a book. Long after one finds them there withered and discoloured—dead, but conserving still some faint perfume of their original sweetness."

One evening when she was humming something in a low voice to herself, Vicomte Paul said to Mimi—

"What are you singing, dearest?"

"The funeral poem of our love which Rodolphe has lately composed." And she began to sing—

"'I am too poor, sweetheart, to share your fold,
And Custom hard, in such a parlous state,
Ordains oblivion. E'en as those of old,
O Mimi, tearless you accept your fate.

You see, dear, none can rob us of the past,
For ever ours those nights and happy days;
It does not matter that they did not last—
Those that flew fastest flashed the brightest rays.'"

XXI

ROMEO AND JULIET

DRESSED like a portrait in his own journal—the *Iris*—gloved, polished, shaved, curled, the ends of his moustache twisted to a point, stick in hand, eye-glass in eye, expansive, smiling, and rejuvenated, our friend Rodolphe might have been seen one November evening standing on the pavement waiting for a cab to drive him home.

Rodolphe waiting for a cab? What cataclysm had occurred in his private life? At the same moment that the transformed poet twirled his moustache, smoked his regalia and charmed the ladies as they passed, one of his friends was walking along the same street. It was the philosopher, Gustave Colline. Rodolphe saw him coming and recognised him; and who once seeing him was likely to forget him? Colline was loaded as usual with a dozen books. Wearing the immortal nut-brown paletôt, whose durability suggested its having been constructed by the Romans, and his head surmounted with the famous broad-brimmed beaver hat (which has been christened Mambrino's helmet of modern philosophy) beneath whose dome germinated the seed of hyperphysical dreams, Gustave Colline

walked slowly, ruminating over the preface to a work which he had had in the press for the past three months. As he approached the spot where Rodolphe was standing, Colline thought he recognised him, but the supreme elegance of the poet's appearance created doubt and uncertainty in the philosopher's mind.

"Rodolphe in gloves carrying a cane! Chimera! Utopia! What an aberration! Rodolphe curled! He who had no hair worth speaking of! Where is my head? Besides, at such an hour my unhappy friend is in the act of mournful lamentation and composing melancholy verses on the departure of Mademoiselle Mimi, who is the cause of his wretchedness. How deeply I regret this young woman! She made coffee with immense distinction —coffee which is the beverage of serious minds. But I like to think that Rodolphe will console himself, and that he will take unto himself a new coffee-maker."

And Colline was so charmed with his own comment that he was about to cry encore, had not the philosopher's voice wakened within him and called a stentorian "Stop that!"

When, however, he had gone a little nearer, Colline found that he was right: it was Rodolphe, curled, in gloves, and carrying a cane. It was impossible, but it was true.

"Eh, eh! By Jove!" said Colline. "I do not mistake. It is you, sure enough."

"It is I," replied Rodolphe.

And Colline fell to contemplating his friend, endowing his face with the expression employed

by Monsieur Lebrun, painter to the king, to convey surprise. But suddenly he observed two extraordinary objects with which Rodolphe was encumbered. First, a ladder of silken cord; secondly, a cage in which some kind of bird was hopping about. At sight of these Gustave Colline's face took on an expression which Monsieur Lebrun, painter to the king, has forgotten to present in his picture of "The Passions."

"Come," said Rodolphe to his friend. "I distinctly perceive the mental curiosity which is looking out of the windows of your eyes. I am about to satisfy it, only let us quit the public highway. It is so cold that it will freeze your questions and my answers."

And they went together into a café.

Colline's eyes did not quit the cord ladder or the cage containing the bird, who, warmed by the atmosphere of the café, began to sing to Colline in an unknown tongue, for all he had such a knowledge of languages.

"Well," said the philosopher, pointing to the ladder, "what is that?"

"It is a link of union between my friend and me," said Rodolphe in the tones of a mandoline.

"And that?" said Colline, pointing to the bird.

"That?" said the poet, his voice taking on the softness of the evening breeze. "It is a clock."

"Talk without parable—in vile prose, so only that it is understandable."

"Good. Have you read Shakespeare?"

"Yes, I have read him—'To be or not to be.' He was a great philosopher. Yes, I have read him."

"Do you remember *Romeo and Juliet?*"

"Do I remember it?" said Colline; and he began to recite—

"'It is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark.'

"By Jove! Yes, I remember. But what then?"

"What!" said Rodolphe, pointing to his ladder of cords and the birdcage, "you don't understand? It is the poem itself. I am in love, my friend, in love with a woman who is called Juliet."

"Well," said Colline impatiently, "what then?"

"Well, my new divinity being called Juliet, I have conceived the idea of enacting over again Shakespeare's drama. To begin with, my name is no longer Rodolphe, I am called Romeo Montague; and you will oblige me by not calling me anything else. In fact, that all the world may know it, I have it engraved on my new visiting cards. But that is not all. I am going to avail myself of the opportunity of being somebody else when carnival time comes to dress myself in a velvet doublet and wear a sword——"

"To kill Tybalt with?" asked Colline.

"Precisely," continued Rodolphe; "and this ladder which you see is to assist me to enter my mistress's chamber, which, as it happens, has a balcony."

"But the bird, the bird!" said the obstinate Colline.

"Eh, well, this bird, which is a pigeon, is to play the part of nightingale, and indicate every morning the precise moment when, as I quit her adored arms, my mistress is to embrace me with both arms

flung round my neck, and to say in her sweet tones, exactly as in the balcony scene, 'It is not yet near day: 'tis not the lark.' That is to say, 'No, it is not yet eleven. There is mud in the streets. Don't go. We are so comfortable here.' In order to complete the imitation, I am going to try and get a nurse and place her at the service of my lady love; and I hope that now and again the almanack will give me a little moonlight, so that I can climb up to my Juliet's balcony. What do you say to my project, philosopher?"

"It is delightful," said Colline, "but can you further explain the mystery of this superb raiment which renders you almost unrecognisable? Have you become rich?"

Rodolphe did not reply, but he signed to a waiter, and carelessly threw down a louis, saying, 'Pay!'"

Then he clapped his pockets, which rattled musically.

"You have a bell-tower in your pockets to produce such sounds as that?"

"A few louis merely."

"Gold louis?" said Colline in a voice half suffocated with astonishment. "Show us a little how it is done."

Then the two friends separated, Colline to go and relate the opulence and the new loves of Rodolphe, the other to return home.

This took place during the week following the second rupture of Rodolphe's love passages with Mlle. Mimi. Accompanied by his friend Marcel, the poet, when he broke with his sweetheart, had felt the need of change of air and scene and

he quitted the furnished rooms, whose landlord saw him and Marcel part for good without too much regret. Both, as has been already related, had sought a lodging elsewhere, and engaged two rooms in the same house and on the same floor. Rodolphe's chamber was infinitely more comfortable than any he had lodged in before. There was really some substantial furniture in it, especially a couch upholstered in a sort of stuff imitating velvet, which stuff by no means said, "Do as you please."

There were also upon the mantelshelf two porcelain vases painted with flowers, flanking an alabaster clock with hideous ornamentation. Rodolphe put the vases in a cupboard; and on the landlord coming to wind up the clock, the poet begged him not to do so.

"I consent to the clock remaining where it is," he said, "but only as an object of art. It points to midnight. That is a good hour. Let it keep to it. The day it goes to five minutes past I leave. A clock!" continued Rodolphe, who had never been able to submit himself to the imperious tyranny of such a thing. "It is an enemy who implacably measures your existence out of you, hour by hour, minute by minute, and says to you every instant, 'Here goes a bit of your life.' Ah, I could not sleep quietly in a room where one of these instruments of torture stands to render dreams and sweet leisure impossible; a clock, whose hands stretch to your bed and pinch you in the morning when you are wrapped in the soft delights of first awakening; a clock, whose voice cries to you, 'Ding, ding, ding! It is time for work: leave your

lovely dreams ; come away from the caresses of your visions (or it may be of your realities). Put on your hat, your boots ; it rains. Get to your business. It is time—ding, ding, ding!' It is enough and more to have an almanack. Let my clock remain paralysed. If not——" And thus indulging in his monologue, he examined his new dwelling, disturbed by that secret disquietude one always feels on taking up fresh quarters.

"I have noticed," he went on to himself, "that the places we inhabit exercise a mysterious influence on our thoughts, and consequently on our actions. This room is cold and silent as a tomb. If ever cheerfulness comes here it must be let in from without, and then it will not last long, for laughter would die echoless under this low ceiling, cold and white as a snowy sky. Alas! what will my life be between these four walls?"

* * * * *

Notwithstanding, a few days later this melancholy chamber was full of light and resounded with joyous chatter. They were having a house-warming, and numerous bottles assisted the merriment of the guests. Rodolphe himself was soon won over by the contagious good humour of his friends. In a corner beside a young lady, who was one of the company, and with whom Rodolphe was greatly taken, the poet made madrigals with lips and hands. Before the end of the banquet he had obtained from her a rendezvous for next day.

"Well," he said to himself when he was alone again, "the evening hasn't passed so badly, and my coming here seems to begin well."

The next day, at the appointed hour, Mlle. Juliet arrived. The evening passed in explanations. Juliet had heard of the recent rupture between Rodolphe and the blue-eyed girl he had so deeply loved. She knew that after giving her up Rodolphe had taken her back again, and she was afraid of being a new victim to these amorous comings and goings.

"You see," she added, with a pretty little mutinous air, "I have no fancy for playing a ridiculous part. I warn you I am very troublesome. Once *mistress* here,"—and she emphasised the significance she gave the word with a look—"I yield my place to no one!"

Rodolphe called up all his eloquence to convince her that her fears were ill founded, and the young woman having every desire to be convinced, they finished by entirely understanding each other. Only they did not understand when midnight struck, for Rodolphe wanted Juliet to remain, and she was bent on going.

"No," she said, when he insisted. "What is the need of hurry? We shall reach where we ought to reach if you do not stop me on the way. I will come back to-morrow." And she came in this manner every evening for a week, to leave again when midnight sounded.

This slow fashion did not particularly vex Rodolphe. In love, or even in caprice, he was of the class of travellers who take their time on the road and make it picturesque. This little sentimental preface resulted in dragging Rodolphe on, and it was doubtless in order to lead him to the

point at which fancy, mellowed by resistance, begins to resemble love that Mlle. Juliet employed her stratagem.

At each visit she paid Rodolphe Juliet remarked a deeper tone of sincerity in what he said to her. He betrayed, when she happened to come a little late, a symptomatic impatience which charmed her, and he even wrote her letters couched in terms which led her to hope that she would quickly become his legitimate mistress.

As Marcel, who was his confidant, happened once to see one of these letters of Rodolphe's, he said to him laughingly—

"Is it merely a way of speaking, or do you really mean what you say?"

"Yes, I mean it," replied Rodolphe, "and I am a little astonished at it, but so it is. A week ago I was in a wretched frame of mind. This solitude and this silence, which succeeded so cruelly to the tempests of the old way of living, upset me terribly, but Juliet came almost suddenly. I heard once more the echoes of the gaiety of the days when I was only twenty. I had before me a fresh young face, eyes beaming with smiles, a mouth made for kisses, and I allowed myself to be softly led on by this little woman and a fancy which I thought might develop into love. I love to love."

Rodolphe, however, saw that it was for him to bring this little romance to a conclusion, and then it was that he conceived the notion of copying Shakespeare's scene of the love-making of Romeo and Juliet. His future mistress had found the idea amusing, and consented to play her part in it. It

was on the evening for which the rendezvous had been fixed that Rodolphe met Colline as he was bringing home his purchase of silken cord with which he was to scale his Juliet's balcony. The bird-seller to whom he applied for a nightingale not having one in stock, Rodolphe had substituted a pigeon, which the man assured him always sang every morning at sunrise.

As he entered his room the poet began to reflect that an ascent on a cord ladder might not be so easy, and that it would be as well to do a little rehearsal of the balcony scene if, apart from the chances of a fall, he did not wish to make himself ridiculous and clumsy in the eyes of her who would be waiting for him. Having fastened his ladder to two nails firmly fixed into the ceiling, Rodolphe employed his remaining two hours in gymnastics, and after an infinite number of attempts he succeeded in climbing a dozen steps.

"Come, that is all right," he said to himself; "I am sure of it now, and besides, if I stick by the way, love will give me wings." And laden with his ladder and his pigeon-cage, he found his way to Juliet's house, which was not far off. Her room was situated at the end of a little garden, and really had outside it a sort of little balcony; but the room was a ground-floor one, and the balcony could be climbed with the greatest ease.

Rodolphe was therefore considerably depressed when he perceived that the position of the balcony did not allow of his poetical plan for scaling it.

"No matter," he said to Juliet, "we can do the balcony episode all the same. Here is a bird who

will waken us to-morrow morning with his melodious voice, and will warn us of the precise moment when we must separate in despair"; and Rodolphe hung the cage in a corner of the room.

Next morning towards five o'clock the pigeon was punctual, and filled the room with a cooing which must have wakened the lovers had they slept.

"Well," said Juliet, "now is the time to go out on the balcony and make our despairing adieus. What do you think?"

"The pigeon is too fast," said Rodolphe. "This is November; the sun doesn't rise till midday."

"No matter," said Juliet, "I'm going to get up."

"Why should you do that?"

"I'm hungry, and I tell you plainly that I could eat any amount."

"The harmony between us is wonderfully sympathetic. I am also atrociously hungry," said Rodolphe, getting up and dressing himself hastily.

Juliet had already lighted a fire, and looked on her sideboard, where she found nothing, Rodolphe helping her in the search.

"Here," he said, "onions!"

"And lard!" said Juliet.

"And butter!"

"And bread!"

Alas! it was all.

During the search the optimistic and careless pigeon sang on his perch.

Romeo looked at Juliet, Juliet looked at Romeo. Both looked at the pigeon.

They said no more. The pigeon's fate was sealed.

It was a lost case for him. Hunger is a cruel counsellor.

Rodolphe had lighted the fire and put the butter in the saucepan. His air was grave and solemn.

Juliet sliced the onions in a melancholy attitude, the pigeon sang on; it was his willow song. With the soft lamentation was joined the song of the butter in the saucepan.

Five minutes after the butter still sang, but, like the Templars, the pigeon sang no more. Romeo and Juliet had fitted their clock to the gridiron.

"He had a pretty voice," said Juliet as they sat down to table.

"He is very tender," said Rodolphe, cutting up his alarum perfectly cooked; and the two lovers, looking at each other, surprised a tear in each other's eyes.

Hypocrites! It was the onions which made them cry!

XXII

EPILOGUE TO THE LOVES OF RODOLPHE AND MADEMOISELLE MIMI

DURING the early days of his final rupture with Mademoiselle Mimi, who left him, it will be remembered, to drive in Vicomte Paul's carriages, the poet Rodolphe had striven to stifle down regret by taking another sweetheart. She was fair, and we have seen him dress himself up as Romeo in a moment of folly and absurdity. The liaison, however, which on his side was nothing but a matter of spite and on hers of caprice, could not have lasted long. The girl was, after all, a silly creature, who knew how to harp to perfection on the strings of gay life, intelligent enough to mark intelligence in others and take advantage of it, and with no more feeling than the amount needed to render her uncomfortable when she had eaten too much. Added to this she had a boundless love of self and an unbridled vanity, which had driven her on to prefer her lover running the risk of a broken leg to having a flounce the less in her dress or a faded ribbon in her bonnet. Of questionable beauty, she was a commonplace creature, full of bad instincts, yet attractive under certain conditions and at certain times. She at once saw that Rodolphe had taken her up simply to help him to forget the absent love, which she did not

succeed in doing, for never had Mimi lived so entirely and vividly in his heart as now.

One day Juliet was talking of her lover the poet with a medical student who was paying court to her. "My dear child," he said, "that man makes use of you as use is made of nitrate to cauterise pain. He wants to cauterise his heart, and you are very wrong to want to cause bad blood by being true to him."

"Ah, ah!" cried the young girl, bursting into a shout of laughter. "Do you really suppose it interferes with my arrangements?" And the same evening she gave the student proof to the contrary.

Thanks to the indiscretion of one of his officious friends, who was unable to keep to himself any intelligence capable of causing vexation to others, Rodolphe got wind of the affair, and found a pretext for breaking with his sweetheart.

Then he shut himself up in absolute solitude, where all sorts of bats of weariness and melancholy came to make their nests, and he called hard work to his assistance, but it was in vain. Every evening, after struggling till the drops of perspiration fell as fast as the drops of ink he used, he wrote verses, in which old ideas, more worn out than the Wandering Jew, and miserably clothed in rags and tatters borrowed from literary fripperies, danced clumsily upon ropes of rubbish. In re-reading over these lines Rodolphe stood dismayed, like a man who sees weeds sprung up where he thought he had planted roses. Then he tore up the pages on which he had written his platitudes and trampled the fragments under his feet in an access of rage.

"No," said he, beating his breast where his heart lay hidden, "the cord is broken. I must resign myself." And as for long past the same conviction followed all his efforts, he was seized with the indolence which discourages and shakes the pride and power of the strongest and most brilliant intellects. Nothing indeed is more terrible than these solitary struggles which take place at times between the stubborn artist and rebellious art. Nothing is more distressing than these invitations, now suppliant, now imperious, which are addressed to the disdainful or fugitive muse. The worst human suffering, the deepest wounds struck at the inmost heart, do not cause any approach to the agony of those hours of self-distrust and impatience known to all who follow the perilous vocation of imaginative literature. To these violent crises succeeded cruel exhaustion, and Rodolphe would remain then for hours at a time, as if petrified in motionless stupidity. His elbows on the table, his eyes stonily fixed on the luminous space which the lamp's rays shed on the sheets of paper, "the battle field" where his soul was daily vanquished and where his pen stumbled in its struggles to grasp the elusive ideas, he saw slowly passing in his mind's eye, like the figures of a magic-lantern panorama, fantastic figures of his past. First those laborious days, whose every hour that struck sounded the accomplishment of a task, the studious nights passed in the company of the muse who came to people his solitary and patient poverty with her magic charm; and he recalled with envy the pride which intoxicated him when he had fulfilled his self-imposed tasks.

"Oh! nothing can equal you," he would cry, "nothing can rival it. Luxurious fatigue of work, which renders the mattress of *far niente* so soft! No selfish satisfaction, no feverish delights hidden amid heavy curtains of mysterious alcoves; nothing can rival or come near this honest and calm delight, this legitimate self-content which work gives to the worker as his first reward." And his eyes still fixed on these visions which painted for him times and scenes long past, he would mount in imagination once more six flights of stairs to all the attics where his chequered existence had been spent, and whither his muse, then his only love, faithful and persevering friend, had always followed him, cheering his poverty and never interrupting his song of hope. But lo! in the midst of this tranquil and regular existence suddenly appears the figure of a woman, and seeing her enter where she had hitherto been sole queen and mistress, the poet's muse rose sadly and yielded up her place to the new-comer in whom she knew a rival. Rodolphe hesitated for a moment between the muse, to whom his glance seemed to cry, "Remain," while an inviting gesture to the stranger seemed to say, "Come"; and how could she be repelled, this charming being who advanced towards him graced with all the seductiveness of beauty at its dawn? A little mouth and rosy lips speaking a frank and ingenuous language, full of soft promises, how refuse to take the little white, blue-veined hand caressingly outstretched towards him? How say, "Begone!" to these flower-garlanded eighteen years whose presence already filled the house with the fragrance of youth and of

gaiety? And then in passionately stirred tones she sang so sweetly the song of temptation. With her brilliant, animated eyes she said so eloquently, "I am love, from whose lips kisses were born. I am pleasure." By her whole person she said, "I am happiness," and Rodolphe let her take him captive. And besides, this girl—was she not, after all, poetry in herself, living and breathing poetry? Did he not owe fresh inspirations to her? Had she not often initiated enthusiasm which bore him so far into the ether of dreams and reverie that he lost sight of earthly things? If he had greatly suffered because of her, was not this suffering the expiation of immeasurable delight and joy which she had given him? Was it not the ordinary revenge of human fate, which forbids absolute happiness as if it were impiety? If the Christian law pardons those who have loved much, it is also because they have suffered much, and terrestrial love never becomes a divine passion till it is purified by tears. As the scent of faded roses intoxicates, so Rodolphe grew intoxicated once again in the memory of this life of old days, whose every day produced a new elegy, a terrible drama, a grotesque comedy. He passed through all the phases of his strange love for the dear absent one from the days of their honeymoon to the domestic storms which had brought about their last rupture. He recalled all the trickeries of his former mistress, he repeated to himself all her little mots and jests. He saw her dancing round him in their little chamber, humming her song of "Ma Mie Annette" ("My love Annette") and meeting with the same careless light-heartedness

good days and bad days, and winding up the account, he told himself that reason was always wrong in love. In brief, what had he gained by this rupture? When he lived with Mimi she deceived him, it is true; but if he had known anything of it, it was his own fault, and because he gave himself infinite trouble to ascertain the fact, because he spent his time in unearthing proof and sharpened with his own hand the daggers he plunged into his heart. Besides, was not Mimi skilful enough in demonstrating to him that it was, after all, he who deceived himself? And with whom had she been unfaithful to him? It was generally with a shawl, with a hat—with things and not with men. This tranquillity, this calm he had looked for in separating himself from her, had he found them after her departure? Alas! no. There was less of it all in his home. Once upon a time he could pour out his troubles, he could indulge in injuries and misrepresentations, he could show all he suffered and excite the pity of those who caused his sufferings, and now his anguish was solitary, his jealousy had become rage; for formerly he could at least, when he suspected anything, prevent Mimi from going out, keep her beside him in his own possession, and now he met her in the street on the arm of her new lover, and he had to go out of his way to let her pass, happy, no doubt, and bent on pleasure.

This wretched existence lasted three or four months. Very gradually calmness returned. Marcel, who had gone on a long journey to help him to forget Musette, returned to Paris and again took up his quarters with Rodolphe. They consoled each other.

Rodolphe and Mlle. Mimi

One day—one Sunday—crossing the Luxembourg Rodolphe met Mimi magnificently dressed.

She was going to a ball. She made a sign of recognition with her head, to which he responded by a bow. This meeting gave his heart a great blow, but agitation was less painful than usual. He walked for some time about the gardens, and then returned home. When Marcel came in in the evening he found him at work.

"Ah!" said Marcel, bending over his shoulder, "you are at work. Verses?"

"Yes," replied Rodolphe in a joyful tone. "I don't think the little beast is quite dead yet. I have been at it for four hours. I have found the spirit of the old days. I have seen Mimi."

"Ah!" said Marcel in disquieted tones. "And where are you?"

"Don't be afraid," said Rodolphe. "We have gone no farther than a passing bow."

"Truly?" said Marcel.

"Truly. It is at an end between us. I feel that. But if I can work again, I pardon her."

"If all is ended as much as that," said Marcel, when he had finished reading Rodolphe's verses, "why make verses to her?"

"Alas!" replied the poet, "I make my poetry where I find it."

For a week he worked at the little poem. When he had finished it he went to read it to Marcel, who pronounced approval; and this encouraged Rodolphe to continue to work the vein which he had found again.

"For," said Marcel, "the pain of parting from

Mimi is not so great if you can always live with her shadow. After that," he added, smiling, "instead of preaching to others, I should do well to preach to myself, for Musette still fills my heart. Well, perhaps we shall not be always young men foiled by such creatures."

"Alas!" rejoined Rodolphe; "there is no need to say to our youth, 'Begone!'"

"That is true," said Marcel. "And there are days when I feel I should like to be a real old gentleman—member of the Institute, decorated with several orders, and quit of the Musettes of this world. Deuce take me if I would return to it! And you," added the artist, laughing, "would you like to be sixty?"

"I should like sixty francs better," replied Rodolphe.

A few days after this Mlle. Mimi being in a café with Vicomte Paul, opened a review, in whose columns were the verses Rodolphe had made.

"Excellent!" she cried laughingly. "Here is my friend Rodolphe again, who is reviling me in print."

But when she had finished the verses she sat silent and dreamy. Vicomte Paul, guessing that she was thinking of Rodolphe, strove to divert her mind.

"I am thinking of buying you a pair of earrings," he said.

"Ah!" said Mimi, "you have money."

"And a Leghorn hat," continued Vicomte Paul.

"No," said Mimi; "if you want to give me pleasure, buy me that," and she showed him the review in which she had read Rodolphe's poetry.

"Ah, no, not that," said the Vicomte vexedly.

"Very well," coldly said Mimi, "I will buy it myself with the money I earn myself. At all events, I should prefer it not to be with your money."

And for two days Mimi went back to her old flower-mounting work and earned enough to buy the book. She learned Rodolphe's poetry by heart, and in order to make Vicomte Paul furious she repeated the verses constantly to her friends.*

* * * * *

It was the 24th of December, and the Quartier Latin wore an unusual aspect. From four o'clock in the afternoon the offices of the pawnbrokers, the second-hand clothes shops and booksellers' shops had been surrounded by an eager crowd, which pushed on later in the evening to take the eating and grocers' shops by assault. If the shopmen had had a hundred arms like Briareus, they could not have served the customers quick enough. At the bakers' they formed a queue as if there was a famine. The wine merchants poured out the product of many a vintage, and a skilful statistician would have had all his work to number up the hams and sausages exposed for sale at the famous Borel of the Rue Dauphine. On this particular evening old Cretaine (nick-named *Petit-Pain*) exhausted eighteen editions of his butter cakes. All night long stir and bustle and voices sounded in the lodging-houses, whose windows flared

* See Appendix.

with light, and a general air of festivity prevailed.

The antique custom of the midnight-meal was being celebrated.

That evening, about ten o'clock, Marcel and Rodolphe returned to their lodging in a very depressed state of mind. Passing up by the Rue Dauphine, they looked at the immense collection of good things displayed in a ready-cooked pork-butcher's shop, and they stopped for an instant on the pavement tantalised by the fragrance of the gastronomical wares. The two Bohemians, as they stood there, resembled the individual in the Spanish romance, whose hungry gaze shrivelled up the hams as he looked at them.

"That is called truffled turkey," said Marcel, pointing to a magnificent bird whose semi-transparent pink epidermis afforded visions of the Périgord tubercles with which it was stuffed. "I have seen irreverent folks eat that without first falling on their knees," added the painter, casting such burning glances at the turkey that they might have roasted it.

"And what do you think of this shoulder of mutton?" chimed in Rodolphe. "What glorious colour! One might imagine it just taken from that butcher's shop that is in one of Jordaën's pictures. Shoulder of mutton is the favourite food of the gods and of Madame Chandelier, my godmother."

"Just look at these fish," said Marcel, turning his gaze upon some trout. "They are the most skilful swimmers of the aquatic species. These small creatures, who wear the most unpretentious air, have the power, nevertheless, of amassing revenues

by their extraordinary activity. Only imagine that they will ascend a torrent with as much facility as we would accept an invitation to supper! I could eat them!"

"And yonder, that pile of gilded fruit whose leaves resemble a panoply of sabres; they are called bananas. They are the pippins of the tropics."

"They may be," said Marcel. "I prefer this piece of beef, this ham, or this simple gammon cuirassed in clear jelly like amber."

"You are right," replied Rodolphe. "Ham is the friend of man, when he gets it. All the same, I should not refuse this pheasant."

"I should think not. It is the dish of crowned heads."

And as in continuing their way they met joyous processions careering along, fêting Momus, Bacchus, Comus and all the gourmand divinities whose names end in *us*, they asked each other who was the personage named Gamache whose wedding was celebrated with such a huge provisioning.

Marcel was the first who recalled the date and fête of the day.

"To-day is the celebration of the Revéillon—the midnight meal," he said.

"Do you remember what we did on it last year?" said Rodolphe.

"Yes," replied Marcel. "We were at Momus'. It was Barbemuche who paid. I could never have believed that such a delicate-looking girl as Phémie could have put away such a quantity of sausage."

"What a misfortune that Momus no longer cares for our patronage!" said Rodolphe.

"Alas!" said Marcel, "the seasons follow on, but do not resemble each other."

"Are you not going to keep Revéillon?" asked Rodolphe.

"With whom and with what?" demanded the painter.

"With me, then."

"And the wherewithal?"

"Wait a bit," said Rodolphe. "I am going into this café where I know men who play high. I will borrow a few sesterces of one of luck's favourites, and I will buy something to wash down a sardine or a pig's trotter."

"Go then," said Marcel. "I am famishing. I will wait for you."

Rodolphe entered the café, many of whose frequenters he knew. A gentleman who had just won three hundred francs in three throws of the ball found real pleasure in lending the poet a forty-sous piece, handing it to him with the ill-humoured air which the fever of gambling bestows. At another time and another place than round a green table he might possibly have lent him forty francs.

"Well?" asked Marcel, as Rodolphe returned.

"Here are the receipts," said the poet, showing the money.

"A crust and a drop," said Marcel.

With this limited amount they were able, however, to buy bread, wine, a bit of cooked meat, some tobacco, light, and firing.

They went home to the lodging, where each occupied a separate chamber. Marcel's lodging, which served him for a studio, being the larger, was chosen

for the hall of festivities, and the two friends prepared together for their banquet.

But at the little table to which they sat down, beside the fire sputtering with damp poor wood that emitted neither flame nor heat, there came and joined them a melancholy guest—the phantom of the vanished past.

They remained sitting for full an hour, silent and thoughtful, both probably occupied with similar thoughts, and each striving to hide them. Marcel was the first to break silence.

"No," he said to Rodolphe, "it wasn't quite this we promised ourselves."

"What do you mean?" said Rodolphe.

"Ah! Hang it!" replied Marcel. "Don't put it on with me. You are thinking of what is best forgotten. I also; I don't deny it. Well, what then? Let it be for the last time. To the deuce with the memories which make the wine taste sour and ourselves wretched when all the world is amusing itself!" cried Marcel, as the shouts of merriment sounded from the rooms adjoining theirs. "Come, now, let us think of other things, and let it be for the last time."

"That is what we always say. And yet——" said Rodolphe, dropping back into his thoughts.

"And yet we are for ever recurring to them," said Marcel. "That is because, instead of frankly seeking forgetfulness, we make the most futile things pretexts for recalling these memories; that is because, above all, we insist on living in the same localities where the creatures have lived who have been our torment. We are the slaves of habit more than of passion. It is this environment which must be broken through, this captivity in which we ridicu-

lously and shamefully waste ourselves. Well, the past is the past; we must snap the chains still holding us to it. The hour is come for us to go forward and look no more behind us; we have lived our life of youthfulness and heedlessness and absurdities. All that was very fine, and would make a good romance; but this farce of amorous folly, this waste of days, thrown away with a prodigality which seems to think it has eternity to live in, all this must have an end. Under pain of justifying the scorn it holds us in and that in which we hold ourselves, it is not possible for us to live longer on the outskirts of society, almost on the outskirts of life. For is it existence which we are leading? And this independence, this freedom of manners we vaunted so highly, is it not a very middling advantage? True liberty is the power to live among others and exist for one's self; is that our mode of life? No, the first scurvy fellow that comes along, whose name we would not bear for a poor five minutes, takes advantage himself of the banter to which we treat him and becomes our master the day we borrow a hundred sous of him, which he lends us after making us spend a hundred crowns' worth of excuses and humiliation. For my part I have had enough of it. Poetry does not dwell only in the disorder of existence, in suddenly trumped-up pleasures and amusements, in love affairs which last about the length of a burning candle's life, in more or less eccentric rebellions against the prejudices which will eternally govern the world. A dynasty is more easily overthrown than a custom, even though it be a ridiculous one. It is not enough to throw a summer coat over one in December to

have talent, one can be a poet and a true artist even if one keeps one's feet warm and eats three meals a day. Whatever one may say, or whatever one may do, if one would achieve anything one must follow the ordinary road. These words astonish you a little perhaps, friend Rodolphe; you will say I am destroying my idols, you will call me corrupted, but all the same, what I say is the expression of my sincere conviction. Without my being aware of it, it has worked a slow and salutary change within me; reason has entered into my soul burglariously and from without, if you will, and in spite of myself perhaps, but it has entered, and has proved to me that I was in a wrong path, and that there will be at once ridicule and danger to meet in persevering in it. For example, what would happen if we continue this monotonous and useless mode of life? We are nearing our thirty years—unknown, solitary, disgusted with everything and with ourselves, full of envy against those whom we see attaining their desired ends, whatever those may be, forced in order to keep the breath of life in us to have recourse to mean, parasitical ways. And do not imagine I am drawing a fanciful picture expressly for the purpose of annoying you. I do not look systematically through smoked glasses at the future, but neither do I see it through rose-coloured ones any the more for that. Until now the life we have led has been imposed upon us; we had the excuse of necessity. Now we shall no longer be excusable; and if we do not enter into the common ordinary life around us it is because we will not, for the obstacles we had to contend with exist no longer."

"Ah," said Rodolphe, "what are you driving at? What is the aim and use of this lecture?"

"You understand me perfectly well," replied Marcel in the same grave tone. "Just now I saw you as I was, overcome by memories which brought you regrets for the days that are gone. You thought of Mimi as I thought of Musette. You would have had—as I would—your mistress by your side. Well, I tell you that we must not, you nor I, think of them; that we have not been created and put into the world only to sacrifice our existence to these commonplace Manons, and that the Chevalier Desgrieux, who is so handsome, so true and so poetic, would not save himself from ridicule except by his youth and the illusions which he preserved. At twenty years old he might follow his mistress to the Isles without ceasing to be interesting; but at five-and-twenty he would have put Manon outside the door, and he would have been right. We may well say we are old, my dear friend; we have lived too much and too fast; our hearts are battered, and there are only the broken pieces left. It is not possible to come out scatheless from three years of love-making with a Musette or a Mimi. For me all is well over, and as I wish completely to divorce myself of my memories of her, I am actually going to throw into the fire some little things which at sundry times she has left behind with me at our various halts and that force me to think of her when I chance upon them."

And Marcel, who had risen, went to take from a drawer a little pasteboard box in which lay the souvenirs of Musette—a faded bouquet, a sash, a bit of ribbon and several letters.

"Come," he said to the poet, "follow my example, friend Rodolphe."

"Well, be it so," cried Rodolphe, with an effort. "You are right. I too will finish with this girl of the pale hands."

And rising hurriedly he went and found a little parcel containing his souvenirs of Mimi, which were of much the same kind as those of which Marcel was making an inventory.

"It happens luckily," murmured the painter; "these odds and ends will help to light up the fire, which is nearly out."

"Yes," said Rodolphe, "the temperature here is enough to generate white bears."

"Come, now," said Marcel, "let us burn them together. See, that is Musette's prose, which burns like punch thrown in. She was very fond of punch. Come, friend Rodolphe. Attention!"

And for some minutes they took turns in throwing into the flames, which began to blaze up clear and fiercely, the objects of their dead and gone love.

"Poor Musette!" said Marcel in a low tone as he gazed at the last thing he had in his hands. It was a little faded bouquet composed of wild flowers. "Poor Musette! She was very pretty, though, and she loved me immensely, didn't she, little flowers? Her heart told you so, did they not, the day she put you in her waistband? Poor little bouquet! you seem to be asking mercy of me. Very well. Yes, but on one condition. It is that you never speak again to me of her. Never! never!" And profiting by a moment when he thought Rodolphe did not see him, he slipped the bouquet into the breast of his coat.

"So much the worse. He has more nerve than I have. I am cheating," murmured the painter to himself.

But then, casting a furtive look at Rodolphe, he saw the poet, who had arrived at the end of his *auto-da-fé*, secretly putting in his pocket a little cap of Mimi's, after he had tenderly kissed it.

"Ah," muttered Marcel, "he is as great a coward as I am."

At the very moment Rodolphe turned to go into his room for the night two little taps came at Marcel's door.

"Who the deuce is that at this time of night?" said the painter, going to open the door.

A cry of amazement escaped him when the door was opened.

It was Mimi.

As the room was very dark Rodolphe did not at first recognise his mistress, only distinguishing a woman. He supposed her to be only one of Marcel's temporary conquests, and discreetly turned to retire.

"I am disturbing you," said Mimi, who remained standing on the threshold.

At the sound of her voice Rodolphe fell into a chair as if struck by a blow.

"Good night," said Mimi to him, as she approached and took his hand, which he mechanically yielded to her.

"What the devil brought you here?" demanded Marcel. "And at this hour?"

"I am very cold," replied Mimi shiveringly. "I saw light in your window as I was passing in the street, and though it was so late, I came up." And she was still trembling; her voice had the crystal-

line deep sound which pierced Rodolphe's heart like a funeral bell and filled it with a great fear. He looked furtively but closely at her. It was not Mimi; it was her shadow.

Marcel made her sit down by the fire.

Mimi smiled at the sight of the beautiful flames, which danced joyously up the chimney. "That is very nice," she said, stretching her little purple hands over the fire. "By the way, Monsieur Marcel, you don't know why I have come here to you?"

"Upon my honour—no," replied he.

"Well," said Mimi, "I simply came to ask you if you think I could have a room here. They have turned me out of my lodging because I owe a month's rent, and I don't know where to go."

"The devil!" said Marcel, with a head-shake. "We are not in good odour with our landlord, and our recommendation would be worse than no good, my poor child."

"What can I do, then," said Mimi, "since I don't know where to go?"

"Oh!" said Marcel. "You are no longer Vicomtesse?"

"Ah! good heavens! no, no longer."

"But since when is that?"

"For more than two months past."

"You gave the young Vicomte a bad time of it?"

"No," she said, casting a veiled glance at Rodolphe, who had placed himself in the darkest corner of the room, "the Vicomte was savage with me on account of some verses which were composed about me. We quarrelled, and I sent him packing. He is a hateful, miserly prig, so there."

"Still," said Marcel, "he decked you out pretty smartly, judging by what I saw the day I met you."

"Well," said Mimi, "only think that he kept everything back when I left him, and I heard afterwards that he put all my things in a lottery at a table d'hôte where we sometimes used to dine. He is very rich, this fellow, and with all his money he is an avaricious, economical dunderhead—stupid as a goose. He would not let me drink wine undiluted and made me fast on Fridays. Would you believe that he made me wear black woollen stockings, because they did not soil as quickly as white ones? What a notion! In short, he bored me frightfully. Yes, I can tell you that it was purgatory to be with him."

"And does he know of your present position?" asked Marcel.

"I haven't seen him, and I don't want to see him," replied Mimi. "He makes me seasick when I think of him. I would sooner die of hunger than ask him for a sou."

"But," continued Marcel, "since you left him, you have not been alone?"

"Ah!" quickly cried Mimi, "but I have, Monsieur Marcel. I have worked for my living; only, as a flower-maker's calling was not a very lucrative one, I have found another. I am an artist's model, if you have employment for me," she added gaily. And noticing a movement of Rodolphe, from whom she did not take her eyes all the time she was talking to his friend, Mimi continued—

"Ah! but I pose only for the head and the hands.

I have plenty of employment, and two or three people owe me money. I shall receive it in a day or two. That is the reason I am in want of a lodging. When I have some money I shall return to my proper rooms. Ah!" she went on, looking at the table where the repast which the two friends had hardly touched still lay, "you are going to sup?"

"No," said Marcel, "we are not hungry."

"You are very lucky," ingenuously said Mimi.

At these words Rodolphe felt his heart give a horrible bound. He made a sign to Marcel, who understood.

"Well," said the artist, "since you are here, Mimi, you can take pot luck. I had intended to keep Revéillon with Rodolphe, and then—well, we began about other things."

"Then I came at a good time," said Mimi, as she cast a famished look at the food on the table. "I have not dined, my friend," she said in an undertone to the artist, so that she could not be heard by Rodolphe, who was stifling his mouth up with his handkerchief to prevent his sobs being audible.

"Come, Rodolphe," said Marcel to his friend, "let us all three have supper together."

"No," said the poet, not stirring from his corner.

"Does it annoy you, Rodolphe, that I came?" softly asked Mimi. "Where would you have me go?"

"No, Mimi," said Rodolphe. "It only gives me great pain to see you like this."

"It is my own fault, Rodolphe. I do not complain. What is past is past. Don't trouble any more about me. Can you no longer be my friend

because you have been something else? Yes, you can—isn't it so? Well, then, don't look so crossly at me, and come and sit down with us."

She rose and went to take his hand, but she was so weak that she could not take a step, and fell back into the chair.

"The heat has overcome me," she said; "I can't stand."

"Come," said Marcel to Rodolphe, "come and keep us company."

The poet came to the table and sat down with them. Mimi was very bright and animated.

When the frugal supper had ended Marcel said to Mimi—

"My dear child, it will not be possible to find a room for you in this house."

"Then I must go," she said, trying to rise.

"No, no," said Marcel, "there is another way of settling the business. You sleep in my room here, and I will go and be with Rodolphe."

"That will put you to inconvenience," said Mimi, "but it will not last long—only a couple of days."

"Well, then, it will not put us to any inconvenience," said Marcel. "So that is settled. Here you are at home, and I am going to Rodolphe's room. Good night, Mimi; sleep well."

"Thank you," she said, giving her hand to Marcel and to Rodolphe as they went out.

"Will you like to lock the door?" asked Marcel as they neared the door.

"Why should I?" said Mimi, looking at Rodolphe; "I am not afraid."

When the two friends were alone together in

Marcel's room, which was on the same floor, Marcel said sharply to Rodolphe—

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"I—" stammered Rodolphe, "I don't know."

"Come, come, don't make any fuss about it. Go to Mimi, but if you go I prophesy you will be together again."

"If it was Musette who had come back, what would you do?" demanded Rodolphe of his friend.

"If it was Musette who was in the next room," replied Marcel, "eh—well, frankly, I think in a quarter of an hour I should not be in this one."

"Well," said Rodolphe, "I have more courage than you. I stay here."

"We shall see," said Marcel, who was already in bed. "Are you going to lie down?"

"Certainly, yes," said Rodolphe.

But in the middle of the night Marcel, waking, found he was gone.

Next morning he went and knocked softly at the door of the room in which Mimi was.

"Come in," she said. Seeing it was he, she signed to him to speak low, in order not to disturb Rodolphe, who was asleep. He was sitting in an easy chair which he had drawn close beside the bed, his head resting on the pillow beside Mimi's.

"Is that how you have passed the night?" asked Marcel in astonishment.

"Yes," replied the girl.

Rodolphe awoke suddenly, and after kissing Mimi he gave his hand to Marcel, who looked considerably embarrassed.

"I am going to find some money for breakfast,"

Rodolphe said to the painter. "You can stay and keep Mimi company."

"Well," asked Marcel of the girl when they were alone, "what has happened during the night?"

"Very sad things," said Mimi; "Rodolphe still loves me."

"I know that."

"Yes, you wanted to separate me from him. I am not angry with you, Marcel. You were right; I have done the poor fellow great wrong."

"And you," asked Marcel, "do you still love him?"

"Ah! do I love him?" she said, clasping her hands. "It is that which tortures me. I am very much changed, and, my poor friend, it has taken but a short time for that."

"Well, since he loves you and you love him, and you cannot separate from each other, stay together, and try to keep to the arrangement."

"It is impossible," said Mimi.

"Why?" demanded Marcel. "It would certainly be much more reasonable for you to part from each other, but in order never to see each other again you would have to live a thousand miles apart."

"Before long I shall be farther than that."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Don't tell Rodolphe; it would grieve him too much. I am going away for ever."

"But where?"

"Listen, my poor Marcel," said Mimi sobbingly. "Look!" and raising the sheet a little, she showed the artist her shoulders and neck and arms.

"Ah, good God!" cried Marcel in tones of grievous surprise. "Poor girl!"

"Yes, I don't deceive myself, my friend, do I? I am going to die soon."

"But how have you come to this in so short a time?"

"Ah!" replied Mimi, "with the life I have led the last two months it is not astonishing. All the nights passed in crying, the days in fireless studios, poor nourishment, the grief, and—you don't know all. I tried to poison myself with Javel water. They saved me from its effects, but not for long, as you see. And I have never been very strong. It is all my own fault; if I had remained quietly with Rodolphe it would not have happened. My poor friend! Once more I am in his arms, but it will not be for long. The last dress he will give me will be the white one they will bury me in. Ah, if you knew what I suffer to think that I am going to die! Rodolphe knows that I am ill. He was an hour without speaking a word when he saw my arms and my thin shoulders. He could hardly recognise his Mimi. Alas! my mirror itself does not know me. Ah, well, what does it signify? I was very pretty, and he loved me dearly. Ah, my God!" she went on, hiding her face in Marcel's hands. "I am going to leave you and Rodolphe. Ah, my God!" and her voice was lost in sobs.

"Come, Mimi," said Marcel, "don't fret like that. You will get better. You only need care and rest."

"Ah, no," said Mimi. "It is all at an end. I feel it is; and when I came here last night it took me an hour to mount the stairs. If I had found a

girl here I should pretty quickly have gone out again by the window, though he was free, of course, since we were no longer together; but, Marcel, I was certain he still loved me. It is on that account"—and she burst into tears—"that I don't want to die directly; but it is all at an end. Marcel, he must be very good, my poor friend, to have received me back after all the wrong I have done him. Ah, God is cruel and unjust not to leave me time to make Rodolphe forget the grief I have caused him. He knows the state I am in. I would not have him lie down beside me, for it seems to me that I have already the corruption of death in my body. We have spent the night in tears and talking of old times. Ah, how sad it is, my friend, to see behind us happiness of which, when we passed it, we took no heed! I have fire in my bosom, and when I move my limbs it seems as if they must break. Give me my gown, Marcel. I am going to see with the cards whether Rodolphe will bring back any money. I should like to have a real good breakfast with you; it won't do me any harm. God can't make me worse than I am. Look!" she added, showing her cards, which she had just cut, "the ace of spades, and it is black—the colour of death. And here are clubs," she added cheerily. "Yes, there is money coming."

Marcel was speechless before the delirious sense of this poor creature, who was, as she said, already yielding to the corruptions of the grave.

About an hour later Rodolphe came back. He was accompanied by Schaunard and Gustave Colline. The musician wore his summer coat. He had sold

his cloth coat and lent Rodolphe the money on learning that Mimi was ill. Colline, on his part, had sold some books. Anyone might have bought one of his arms or legs sooner than he would part with his dear books; but Schaunard had reminded him that nothing could be done with an arm or a leg. Mimi made an effort at gaiety to receive her old friends.

"I am not naughty any longer," she said, "and Rodolphe has forgiven me. If he will keep me with him I will put on sabots, and make a fright of myself. It is all the same to me. Silk is decidedly not good for my health," she added, with a ghastly smile.

At Marcel's suggestion Rodolphe sent to ask one of his friends, who had recently entered the medical profession, to come and see Mimi. It was the same one who had attended little Francine. When he came they left him alone with Mimi.

Rodolphe, warned by Marcel, was already aware of the danger his mistress was in. When the doctor had examined Mimi, he said to Rodolphe—

"You will not be able to keep her. Anything less than a miracle cannot save her. She must go to the hospital. I will give you a letter for la Pitié; I know a resident doctor there, who will attend her most carefully. If she lives till the spring, she may be pulled through; but if she remains here, she will be dead in a week."

"I dare not suggest it to her," said Rodolphe.

"I have told her myself," replied the doctor, "and she consents. To-morrow I will send you her letter of admission to the Pitié."

"My friend," said Mimi to Rodolphe, "the doctor is right. You could not nurse me here. Perhaps at

the hospital they may cure me. I must be taken there. Ah, don't you see, I want so much to live now that I would gladly finish my days one hand in the fire and one in yours. Besides, you will come and see me. You must not be unhappy; this young doctor tells me I shall be well taken care of; they give you chicken at the hospital, and they have fire. While I am nursing up you will be working to earn money; and when I am cured I shall come and live with you. I have great hopes now. I shall come back as pretty as I used to be. I have already been ill at times before I knew you, but I got better. Nevertheless, I was not happy then; I would much sooner have died. Now I have you, and we can be happy together; they will save me again, for I will fight with all my power against this illness. I will drink all the vile stuff they can give me; and if death takes me, it will be by force. Give me the little hand-mirror. I think I have got some colour. Yes," she went on, looking at herself in the glass, "there is my pretty pink coming back. And my hands—see," she said, "they are still very nice, aren't they? Kiss them once more; it won't be the last time. There now, my poor friend," she said, flinging her arms round Rodolphe's neck and burying her face in his dishevelled hair.

Before leaving for the hospital she would have all her four Bohemian friends spend the evening with her. "Make me laugh," she said. "Gaiety is health to me. It is this nightcap of a Vicomte who has made me ill. He wanted to teach me to spell; only think! What on earth was I to do? And his friends, what a company!—a veritable poultry-yard, of which he was the peacock. He marked his linen

himself. If he ever marries, I feel sure it will be he who has the babies."

Nothing could be more heart-breaking than the unhappy girl's dying efforts at gaiety. All the Bohemians made painful attempts to hide their tears and maintain the cheerful tone taken up by the poor girl, for whom fate was so fast weaving her last raiment.

The day following the morning she was taken into the hospital Rodolphe received the bulletin of her condition. Mimi was no longer able to stand; they had to carry her into the ward. During the journey she had suffered terribly from the joltings of the cab. In the midst of all her pain the last thing that survives in a woman—vanity—still lived in her. Two or three times she had the cab stopped before the drapers' shops to see the smart things.

On entering the ward indicated on her paper Mimi's heart was near to bursting. Something told her that it was within those bare and ghastly walls her life would end. She summoned up all the will left in her to hide the mournful impressions freezing her soul.

When she was laid in her bed she embraced Rodolphe once more and bade him adieu, telling him to come and see her the following Sunday, which was visiting day.

"The air here doesn't smell nice," she said to him; "bring me flowers—violets. There are still some."

"Yes," said Rodolphe. "Adieu, till Sunday." And he drew the curtains about her bed.

As she heard the departing steps of her lover on the floor Mimi was seized with an almost delirious access of fever. She tore aside the curtains, and

leaning forward from the bed, she cried in a voice broken with tears and sobs—

"Rodolphe, take me away! I want to go away!"

The Sister hurried to her, and tried to soothe her.

"Oh!" said Mimi, "I shall die here!"

On the Sunday morning, the day when he was to go and see Mimi, Rodolphe remembered that he had promised to take her some violets. Prompted by his poetical and amorous fancy, he went on foot through the fearful weather to seek for the flowers his little friend had asked for—in the woods of d'Aulnay and Fontenay, where so many a time he had been with her. The scene that in the fair, sunny June and August days was so gay and delightful he found melancholy and frozen. For two hours he ransacked the snow-shrouded banks, lifting aside the brambles and the sods with a little stick and succeeding in getting a few poor little treasures just in a part of the wood neighbouring the pond of Plessis, which had been their favourite spot when they had gone to the woods.

As he passed through the village of Châtillon on his way back to Paris Rodolphe met near the church a christening party, one among the number being a friend who stood godfather, with a member of the opera.

"What the deuce are you doing here?" asked the friend, amazed at seeing Rodolphe in the country.

The poet told him what had happened. The young man, who knew Mimi, was very much distressed by the story, and feeling in his pocket, he took out a bag of the christening bonbons and gave them to Rodolphe.

"Poor little Mimi!" he said. "Give her these from me, and tell her I shall come and see her."

"You must go soon, then, if you want to be in time," said Rodolphe as they parted.

When Rodolphe reached the hospital, Mimi's eyes leapt to his. She could not move.

"Ah!" she cried, with the smile of eager de- gratified; "there are my flowers."

Rodolphe told her of his journey to the place which had been the paradise of their love.

"Dear flowers!" murmured the poor girl, kissing the violets. The bonbons also pleased her very much. "I am not quite forgotten, then; you are good, you young people. Ah, I love them all—all your friends!" she said to Rodolphe.

The interview was almost cheerful. Schaunard and Colline joined Rodolphe while he was with her. The attendants had to turn them out at last, for visiting time was up.

"Adieu," said Mimi, "till Thursday, without fail, and come early."

The next day, when he came in in the evening, Rodolphe found a letter from one of the resident medical students of the hospital, the one to whose care he had commended the invalid. The letter contained only these words:—

"My Friend,—I have bad news to send you. Number 8 is dead. This morning on passing through the ward I found the bed empty."

Rodolphe sank upon a chair, and he did not shed a tear. When Marcel came in he found his friend in the same place, sitting as if stupefied. Silently he showed Marcel the letter.

"Poor girl!" said Marcel.

"It is strange," cried Rodolphe. "I feel nothing of it. Did my love die when I learned that Mimi must die?"

"Who can tell?" murmured the painter.

Mimi's death caused great grief in the Bohemian circle. A week later Rodolphe met in the street the young doctor who had announced Mimi's death to him.

"Ah, my dear Rodolphe," he said as he came up, "forgive me the suffering my stupidity must have caused you."

"What do you mean?" said Rodolphe, surprised.

"What," said the doctor, "you don't know? You have not seen her again?"

"Whom?" cried Rodolphe.

"Her—Mimi."

"What?" said the poet, turning deadly pale.

"I was mistaken when I wrote you the sad intelligence. I was the victim of an error, and this is how. I was away from the hospital for two days. When I returned, in making my round I found your wife's bed empty. I asked the Sister where the sick girl was, and she told me that she had died in the night. This is what had occurred. During my absence Mimi had been removed from that bed and from the ward. Into number 8 bed, from which she had been taken, another woman had been put, who died the same day. This will explain to you my mistake. On the morning of the day I wrote to you I found Mimi in a neighbouring ward. Your absence had put her into a terrible state. She gave me a letter for you. I have taken it to your house."

"Ah, my God!" cried Rodolphe. "Since I believed Mimi to be dead I have not been home. I

have slept here, there and anywhere among my friends. Mimi is alive! Oh, my God! What can she have thought of my absence? Poor girl! poor girl! How is she? When did you last see her?"

"The day before yesterday morning. She was neither better nor worse. She is terribly disturbed about you, thinking you must be ill."

"Take me with you at once to la Pitié," said Rodolphe, "that I may see her."

"Wait for me an instant," said the doctor, when they reached the door of the hospital. "I must ask the director for leave for you to go in."

Rodolphe waited for a quarter of an hour in the vestibule. When the doctor returned he took Rodolphe by the hand, and said—

"My friend, suppose the letter I wrote to you a week ago was true?"

"What?" said Rodolphe, supporting himself by an iron rail. "Mimi——"

"This morning at four o'clock."

"Take me to the amphitheatre," said Rodolphe, "that I may see her."

"She is no longer there," said the doctor, as he pointed to a great vehicle standing in the courtyard, drawn up before the door of a pavilion above which was written "Amphitheatre." He added, "She is there."

It was, in fact, the van in which the bodies of the unclaimed dead were transported to the paupers' graveyard.

"Adieu," said Rodolphe to the doctor.

"Shall I come with you?" he asked.

"No," said Rodolphe, turning away; "I would rather be alone."

XXIII

YOUTH COMES BUT ONCE

A YEAR after Mimi's death Rodolphe and Marcel, who did not part from each other, inaugurated their entry into the official world with a banquet. Marcel, who had at last found his way into the Salon, had exhibited two pictures, one of which had been bought by a rich Englishman, who had formerly been one of Musette's admirers. With the fruits of this sale, and of that of a Government commission, Marcel had partly liquidated his old debts. He had furnished decent apartments for himself and set up a proper studio. Almost at the same time Schaunard and Rodolphe had appeared before the public which makes fame and fortune, the one with an album of melodies which were sung at all the concerts and laid the foundation of his renown, the other with a book which occupied the attention of the critics for some months. As to Barbemuche, he had long renounced Bohemianism; Gustave Colline had come into an inheritance and made an advantageous marriage. He gave musical soirées, with light refreshments.

One evening to Rodolphe, seated in an easy chair, with his feet on his own carpet, came Marcel in a state of great excitement.

"You don't know what has happened to me," he said.

"No," replied the poet; "I know I have been to your rooms, that you were there, and I was not admitted."

"I heard you. Guess who was with me."

"How should I know?"

"Musette, who tumbled up against me last night."

"Musette! You have found Musette?" said Rodolphe in tones of regret.

"Don't upset yourself; there has been no resumption of hostilities. Musette had been spending her last night in Bohemia with me."

"How?"

"She is going to be married."

"Ah, bah!" said Rodolphe. "To whom, my lord?"

"Her riding-master, who was tutor to her last admirer. A queer fish apparently. Musette said to him, 'My dear sir, before I definitely and certainly give you my hand, and enter the *mairie* with you, I want a week's liberty. I have business to settle, and I want to drink my last glass of champagne, dance my last quadrille and embrace my lover Marcel, who is a gentleman of importance, you know.' And for a week the dear creature has been seeking me. She found me last night, just at the very moment I was thinking of her. Ah, my friend, the night has been a melancholy one. There was to be no more of it all—no more. We looked like the bad copy of a masterpiece. I even made, apropos of this last parting, a little ballad of regrets, with which I am going to make you cry, if you will allow me." And Marcel began to hum the couplets he had written.*

* See Appendix.

"Well, now," said Marcel when he had finished, "you are reassured; my love for Musette is quite dead since poetry has come into it," ironically added he, showing the manuscript of his song.

"Poor friend!" said Rodolphe, "your spirit is wrestling with your heart. Be careful it does not kill it."

"That is done," replied the painter. "We have closed up, old man; we are dead and buried. Youth has but one time. Where do you dine to-night?"

"If you like," said Rodolphe, "we will go and dine for twelve sous in our old restaurant of the Rue du Four, where they had Delft plates and where we used to be so hungry when we had done eating."

"Not I. No," replied Marcel. "I willingly consent to look back upon the past, but it must be through a good bottle of wine and seated in a comfortable easy chair. Ah, what do you want to say? That I am corrupted? I no longer care for anything but what is good and comfortable."

THE END

APPENDIX

RODOLPHE'S poem, referred to on page 365, is given here in the original, followed by a literal prose translation. A similar rendering of Marcel's couplets (p. 391) follows. It has seemed well to give the French verses in both cases, that their peculiar charm might not be missed. A. R. W.

RODOLPHE'S POEM

Alors que je voulais choisir une maîtresse
Et qu'un jour le hasard fit rencontrer nos pas,
J'ai mis entre tes mains mon cœur et ma jeunesse
Et je t'ai dit : Fais-en tout ce que tu voudras.

Hélas ! ta volonté fut cruelle, ma chère :
Dans tes mains ma jeunesse est restée en lambeaux,
Mon cœur s'est en éclats brisé comme du verre,
Et ma chambre est le cimetière
Où sont enterrés les morceaux
De ce qui t'aima tant naguère.

Entre nous maintenant, n—i, ni—c'est fini,
Je ne suis plus qu'un spectre et tu n'es qu'un fantôme,
Et sur notre amour mort et bien enseveli,
Nous allons, si tu veux, chanter le dernier psaume.

Pourtant ne prenons point un air écrit trop haut,
Nous pourrions tous les deux n'avoir pas la voix sûre ;
Choisissons un mineur grave et sans fioriture ;
Moi je ferai la basse et toi le soprano.

Appendix

Mi, ré, mi, do, ré, la.—Pas cet air, ma petite !
S'il entendait cet air que tu chantais jadis,
Mon cœur, tout mort qu'il est, tressaillirait bien vite,
Et ressusciterait à ce *De profondis.*

Do, mi, fa, sol, mi, do.—Celui-ci me rapelle
Une valse à deux temps qui me fit bien du mal,
Le fifre au rire aigu raillait le violoncelle,
Qui pleurait sous l'archet ses notes de cristal.

Sol, do, do, si, si, la.—Point cet air, je t'en prie,
Nous l'avons, l'an dernier, ensemble répété
Avec des Allemands qui chantaient leur patrie
Dans les bois de Meudon, par une nuit d'été.

Eh bien ! ne chantons pas, restons-en là, ma chère ;
Et pour n'y plus penser, pour n'y plus revenir,
Sur nos amours défunts, sans haine et sans colère,
Jetons en souriant un dernier souvenir.

Nous étions bien heureux dans ta petite chambre
Quand ruisselait la pluie et que soufflait le vent ;
Assis dans le fauteuil, près de l'âtre, en décembre,
Aux lueurs de tes yeux j'ai rêvé bien souvent.

La houille petillait ; en chauffant sur les cendres,
La bouilloire chantait son refrain régulier,
Et faisait un orchestre au bal des salamandres
Qui voltigeaient dans le foyer.

Feuilletant un roman, paresseuse et frileuse,
Tandis que tu fermais tes yeux ensommeillés,
Moi je rajeunissais ma jeunesse amoureuse,
Mes lèvres sur tes mains et mon cœur à tes pieds.

Aussi, quand on entrait, la porte ouverte à peine,
On sentait le parfum d'amour et de gaîté
Dont notre chambre était du matin au soir pleine,
Car le bonheur aimait notre hospitalité.

Puis l'hiver s'en alla ; par la fenêtre ouverte,
Le printemps un matin vint nous donner l'éveil,
Et ce jour-la tous deux dans la campagne verte
Nous allâmes courir au-devant du soleil.

Appendix

C'était le vendredi de la sainte semaine,
Et, contre l'ordinaire, il faisait un beau temps,
Du val à la colline, et du bois à la plaine,
D'un pied leste et joyeux, nous courûmes longtemps.

Fatigués cependant par ce pèlerinage,
Dans un lieu qui formait un divan naturel
Et d'où l'on pouvait voir au loin le paysage,
Nous nous sommes assis en regardant le ciel.

Les mains pressant les mains, épaule contre épaule,
Et sans savoir pourquoi, l'un et l'autre oppressés,
Notre bouche s'ouvrit sans dire une parole,
Et nous nous sommes embrassés.

Près de nous l'hyacinthe avec la violette
Mariaient leur parfum qui montait dans l'air pur ;
Et nous vîmes tous deux, en relevant la tête,
Dieu qui nous souriait à son balcon d'azur.

Aimez-vous, disait-il ; c'est pour rendre plus douce
La route où vous marchez que j'ai fait sous vos pas
Dérouler en tapis le velours de la mousse,
Embrassez-vous encor,—je ne regarde pas.

Aimez-vous, aimez-vous : dans le vent qui murmure,
Dans les limpides eaux, dans les bois reverdis,
Dans l'astre, dans la fleur, dans la chanson des nids,
C'est pour vous que j'ai fait renaître ma nature.

Aimez-vous, aimez-vous ; et de mon soleil d'or,
De mon printemps nouveau qui réjouit la terre,
Si vous êtes contents, au lieu d'une prière
Pour me remercier—embrassez-vous encor.

Un mois après ce jour, quand fleurirent les roses,
Dans le petit jardin que nous avions planté,
Quand je t'aimais le mieux, sans m'en dire les causes,
Brusquement ton amour de moi s'est écarté.

Où s'en est-il allé ? partout un peu, je pense ;
Car faisant triompher l'une et l'autre couleur,
Ton amour inconstant flotte sans préférence
D'un brun valet de pique au blond valet de cœur.

Appendix

Te voilà maintenant heureuse : ton caprice
Règne sur une cour de galants jouvenceaux,
Et tu ne peux marcher sans qu'à tes pieds fleurisse
Un parterre émaillé d'odorants madrigaux.

Dans les jardins de bal, quand tu fais ton entrée,
Autour de toi se forme un cercle langoureux ;
Et le frémissement de ta robe moirée,
Pâme en chœur laudatif ta meute d'amoureux.

Élégamment chaussé d'une souple bottine
Qui serait trop étroite au pied de Cendrillon,
Ton pied est si petit qu'à peine on le devine
Quand la valse t'emporte en son gai tourbillon.

Dans les bains onctueux d'une huile de paresse,
Tes mains, brunes jadis, ont retrouvé depuis
La pâleur de l'ivoire ou du lis que caresse
La rayon argenté dont s'éclairent les nuits.

Autour de ton bras blanc une perle choisie
Constelle un bracelet ciselé par Froment,
Et sur tes reins cambrés un grand châle d'Asie
En cascade de plis ondule artistement.

La dentelle de Flandre et le point d'Angleterre,
La guipure gothique à la mate blancheur,
Chef-d'œuvre arachnéen d'un âge séculaire,
De ta riche toilette achève la splendeur.

Pour moi, je t'aimais mieux dans tes robes de toile
Printanière, indienne ou modeste organdi,
Atours frais et coquets, simple chapeau sans voile,
Brodequins gris ou noirs, et col blanc tout uni.

Car ce luxe nouveau qui te rend si jolie
Ne me rappelle pas mes amours disparus,
Et tu n'es que plus morte et mieux ensevelie
Dans ce linceul de soie où ton cœur ne bat plus.

Lorsque je composai ce morceau funéraire,
Qui n'est qu'un long regret de mon bonheur passé,
J'étais vêtu de noir comme un parfait notaire,
Moins les bésicles d'or et le jabot plissé.

Appendix

Un crêpe enveloppait le manche de ma plume,
Et des filets de deuil encadraient le papier
Sur lequel j'écrivais ces strophes où j'exhume
Le dernier souvenir de mon amour dernier.

Arrivé cependant à la fin d'un poëme
Où je jette mon cœur dans le fond d'un grand trou,
— Gaîté de croque-mort qui s'enterre lui-même,
Voilà que je me mets à rire comme un fou.

Mais cette gaîté-là n'est qu'une raillerie :
Ma plume en écrivant a tremblé dans ma main,
Et quand je souriais, comme une chaude pluie,
Mes larmes effaçaient les mots sur le vélin.

When, seeking love, fate one day led my steps to thine, I gave into thy hands my heart and youth and said, "Do with them as thou wilt."

Ah, thy will was cruel, dear; in thy hands youth bides in tatters; my heart is shivered like a broken glass, and my room is but the graveyard wherein lie buried fragments of that which once so loved thee.

Between us now, not—not—ah, it is over, and thou art but a phantom, I but a shade. Come, if thou wilt, and sing the last hymn to our love, dead and fast buried.

Set not too high a note; not mine, nor thine, a voice unfaltering. We'll sing in sad and sober minor, thy treble with my bass.

Mi, ré, mi, do, ré, la—not that, my little one. Hearing thy song of days gone by, my heart, dead though it be, would thrill at once, and to that *De profundis* rise to life.

Do, mi, fa, sol, mi, do—ah, that recalls a valse which saddens me — once more laughing fifes mock strings as, crossed by bow, they sob their liquid note.

Sol, do, do, si, si, la—not that, I pray thee. Last year we sang that air together, with Germans singing of their land, one summer night in Meudon woods.

Ah, well, we will not sing, we'll break off there, dear; and over our dead loves—no more to be thought of, no more to come back—without ill-will or anger, but in smiles, we'll throw a last remembrance.

Appendix

We were very happy in thy little room when the rain pattered down and the wind blew; how often in December have I sat in the chair by the fireside and dreamed by the light of thine eyes!

The coal crackled; warming in the ashes, the kettle sang its steady refrain, making dance-music for the salamanders playing about the hearth.

Thou, turning the leaves of a novel, lazy and chilly, now and then closing eyes full of sleep; I, renewing my young days of love, my lips on thy hand and my heart at thy feet.

And again, coming in, the door scarcely open, one breathed the perfume of love and joy that filled our room from morn till night—for happiness loved to be our guest.

Then winter passed; one morning through the open window Spring came to call us, and that very day we went together to the green fields to ramble in the sun.

It was the Friday of Holy Week and, for a wonder, a beautiful day. From vale to hill, through wood and plain, we roved with light and happy steps.

Then, tired with our wanderings, we rested on a bank, forming a natural couch, from which we could see far away over the country, and the expanse of the heavens.

Side by side, hand in hand, sad, without knowing why, our lips moved but gave forth no word, and we kissed.

Near by, the scent of hyacinth and violet rose mingling into the pure air, and, as we looked up, God smiled on us from his azure balcony.

"Love one another," he said; "to make your path more pleasant I have stretched a carpet of velvet and of moss: kiss once more.

"Love, love: in the murmuring wind, in the limpid pool, in the verdant wood, in the star, in the flower, in the song of the nest, for you I make all nature young again.

"Love, love: and if you enjoy my golden sunshine, the fresh spring which gladdens the earth, let your thanks take the form of a kiss."

A month from that day, while the roses bloomed in the little garden we had planted, I loved thee still more, but suddenly, without telling me why, thy love for me flew away.

Appendix

Where did it go? Everywhere, I think. For as one or the other colour gained the day thy inconstant love drifted rudderless from a dark knave of spades to a fair knave of hearts.

Now thou art happy: thy fancy reigns over a court of youthful loves, and thy feet tread a flowery bed of scented madrigals.

At the open-air balls, as soon as thou enterest, around thee gathers an affected group; and the rustle of thy skirt raises fripperies of praise from thy crowd of lovers.

Gracefully shod in the lightest of shoes, too small for Cinderella, thy foot is so tiny that hardly can it be seen when a valse carries thee along in its gay whirl.

Thy hands, brown of old, are now white as ivory, or as lilies kissed by the silver ray which lights the night: they have been steeped in the balm of idleness.

Around thy white arm, from a bracelet of Froment's, gleams a rare pearl, and a rich shawl from Cashmere falls gracefully around thee.

Flemish lace and English point, Gothic guipure of ivory white, the spun masterpiece of a bygone age, all add to the splendour of thy dress.

For me, I loved thee better in thy modest spring dress, of print or of muslin, so fresh and naive, thy simple hat veilless, grey stockings or black, and thy white neck crowning all.

But all this new-found luxury making thee so fine does not bring back to me my lost love: thou art but more dead and deeper buried in this rich shroud wherein thy heart no longer beats.

As I write this funeral ode, one long sigh for lost happiness, I am clothed in black just like a lawyer, less his gold spectacles and his frilled shirt.

Crape wraps the handle of my pen, and mourning bands surround the paper on which I write these verses, wherein I enshrine the last memory of my last love.

Come now to the end of a poem in which I toss my heart to the depths of the pit, I laugh like a fool—but this is the liveliness of the undertaker who buries himself.

Appendix

Ah! this gaiety is but mockery: my pen, as I write, trembles in my hand, and, when I smile, my tears, like a warm rain, blot the words on my paper.

MARCEL'S COUPLETS

Hier, en voyant une hirondelle
Qui nous ramenait le printemps,
Je me suis rappelé le belle
Qui m'aima quand elle eut le temps.
— Et pendant toute la journée,
— Pensif, je suis resté devant
Le vieil almanach de l'année
Où nous nous sommes aimés tant.

— Non, ma jeunesse n'est pas morte,
Il n'est pas mort ton souvenir;
Et si tu frappais à ma porte,
Mon cœur, Musette, irait t'ouvrir.
Puisqu'a ton nom toujours il tremble, —
Muse de l'infidélité, —
Reviens encor manger ensemble
Le pain bénit de la gaîté.

— Les meubles de notre chambrette,
Ces vieux amis de notre amour,
Déjà prennent un air de fête
Au seul espoir de ton retour.
Viens, tu reconnaîtras, ma chère,
Tous ceux qu'en deuil mit ton départ,
Le petit lit et le grand verre
Où tu buvais souvent ma part.

Tu remettras la robe blanche
Dont tu te parais autrefois,
Et, comme autrefois, le dimanche,
Nous irons courir dans les bois.
Assis le soir sous la tonnelle,
Nous boirons encor ce vin clair
Où ta chanson mouillait son aile
Avant de s'envoler dans l'air.

Appendix

Musette qui s'est souvenue,
Le carnaval étant fini,
Un beau matin est revenue,
Oiseau volage, à l'ancien nid ;
Mais en embrassant l'infidèle,
Mon cœur n'a plus senti d'émoi,
Et Musette, qui n'est plus elle,
Disait que je n'étais plus moi.

Adieu, va-t'en, chère adorée,
Bien morte avec l'amour dernier ;
Notre jeunesse est enterrée
Au fond du vieux calendrier.
Ce n'est plus qu'en fouillant le cendre
Des beaux jours qu'il a contenus,
Qu'un souvenir pourra nous rendre
La clef des paradis perdus.

Yesterday I saw a swallow heralding the spring, and I was reminded of the spring-like one who loved me while she chose. For the rest of the day my thoughts turned to that old almanack of the year during which we loved so well.

My youth is not dead, nor my remembrance of thee. If thou shouldst knock at the entrance of my heart, Musette, it would open to thee; even at thy name it trembles, O Muse of infidelity. Come back again that we may feed together on bread blessed of gaiety.

The old friends of our love—the very furniture of our little home—already put on a festive air at the mere hope of thy return. Come, my sweetheart, and thou wilt know once again all those who mourned when thou left: the little bed, and the large glass from which so often thou drank to me.

Thou wilt put on again thy white dress, which used to adorn thee, and, as in the old days, we will go on Sundays into the woods, we will rest, in the evening, in the green arbour, we will drink again the sparkling wine that gave wings to thy song ere it floated on the breeze.

One fine day, when the carnival was over, Musette, that bird of passage, returned to her nest. But my heart did not

throb with a welcome for the faithless one, and Musette, who was no longer as of old, said that I too was not as before.

Good-bye, dear one; we must part. The last love is dead beyond recall, and our youth lies buried beneath yon old calendar. We have but been raking over the ashes of the dear dead days for a memory that might yield us the key of lost heavens.

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